

PURPOSE IN THE JUNIOR SCHOOL



# PURPOSE IN THE JUNIOR SCHOOL

*by*

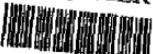
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## SECTION I

### TOWARDS A CURRICULUM IN TERMS OF ACTIVITY AND EXPERIENCE



## I

## INTRODUCTION

This book is intended primarily for teachers. To whom else, indeed, could it usefully be addressed, seeing that it is upon them that the genesis of a worthwhile Junior School in this country very largely, if not entirely, depends? Changes in procedure which have long been agreed upon as right and necessary have tended to remain in abeyance simply because the teaching body has been content enough to await the dispensations of an administrative *deus ex machina* whose benevolence is, to say the least of it, problematical. Unfortunately, educational reform never drops, manna-like, from the skies; it has to be worked for as well as hoped for, fought for on a broad front, constantly pursued as an end in view.

Are teachers in our Junior Schools agreed upon any such end? Is it a fair criticism of their work that too often it has been characterised by a lack of clear and definite aims, by a willingness to accept a curriculum which has been handed down from the past and which in many respects no longer corresponds to the children's present needs? Would it be altogether libellous to suggest that the service which they have rendered has been (dare we say it?) just a little time-serving? Perhaps "unadventurous" would be a safer adjective.

Clearly it would be unjust to say that the forces of inertia are everywhere so strong that nothing has been done, or is being done, to pioneer a more liberal way-of-life for the Junior School. Here and there honest attempts have been made to translate the theory of a curriculum "thought of in terms of activity and experience" into practice, but on

the whole there is no denying that such changes as have been introduced have been piecemeal, tentative and sporadic. Old methods, old assumptions and habits of thought are hard of dying. Many teachers, probably the majority, are content to cling to an orthodoxy which is safe and respectable, no matter if it be outworn and eminently dull.

It seems that there is no general recognition of the exciting possibilities opened up by recent developments, but rather a passive acceptance of established routine. Even the old cliché about the Junior School's being "the Cinderella of the English system of education" has grown so wearisome that it is rarely repeated nowadays. Can it be that because of the long years of neglect during which they received no recognition to speak of, teachers have passed from resignation into apathy? Or do they still live merely in hopes? Cinderella's story, it will be remembered, had a happy issue, but it would obviously be unwise to count on the agency of any Fairy Godmother so far as the future of the Junior School is concerned. Indeed, this book is written in the conviction that what is needed, more than anything else, is a more resolute attitude on the part of the rank and file and that such an attitude can only be fostered by a deeper understanding of the nature of the teacher's whole function in the Junior School.

When the Report of the Consultative Committee on the Primary School was first published in 1931, it seemed both hard and futile that the best advice that could be offered was for the teacher "to have the courage of his convictions." It was one thing to recommend the adoption of "methods which take as the starting point of the work of the Primary School the experience, the curiosity and the awakening powers and interests of the children themselves," it was quite another to attempt any sort of change-over under the conditions then prevailing in the schools. Every circumstance

conspired to hinder progress, every argument could be adduced for not attempting bold experiment—and the upshot has been that throughout the seventeen years which have elapsed the Junior School has remained more or less in a state of arrested development. The danger is that now that some of the main obstacles have at long last been removed there may be neither vision nor purpose enough left to sustain us on the way-ahead. After being kept marking-time for so long, many teachers may not feel disposed to make a move. Some, no doubt, lack convictions of any sort.

Yet the time is as opportune as it is critical. After the upheaval of the war years and the brief fervours aroused by the passing of the 1944 Education Act, the Junior School is settling down into what is likely to prove its final form. In what shape it will crystallize out remains to be seen. At the moment the most that can be said is that there is little or no indication that that shape will be very different from what it was in the past—this despite the fact that there is every reason to believe that the Junior School as we have known it hitherto in this country, has been brought about, not by any process of natural evolution or honourable tradition, but by a series of accidents, mostly unhappy. Its historical determinants, as we shall see, have been political and economic rather than educational. All the more reason, surely, why those who have the shaping of its future in their hands should consider deeply and dispassionately what that future ought to be.

Today we seem to have come to a pause, caught and confused between two voices, one crying "Forward" and the other "Back!" On the one hand are the die-hards who wish to hold fast to the values of the old elementary system—formal instruction, insistence on attainment levels, control of the young idea at all points and the rest; on the other the self-styled progressives who would put the child first in all

things and who allow unrestricted freedom as the sole virtue. One says, "Let the teacher decide what shall be taught. Stick to subjects, time-tables and syllabuses; at least we know where we are with them." The other says, "Away with all such. Let the children show the way." Doubtless this conflict of ideas is the inevitable one between a generation not yet dead and another still struggling to be born. The difficulty is to know just what to preserve from the old and how much to accept from the new. But if any genuine policy is to be framed it is vitally important that we should make our evaluations here and now; we cannot any longer afford either to leave the Junior School to drift or to remain at a standstill. To do so, after the years of the locust, would be fatal.

In the first paragraph of this introduction, the phrase referring to "the genesis of a worthwhile Junior School in this country" was used advisedly. It is not often enough realized that the idea of such a school is a very recent development, and that as yet it remains no more than an idea. To pretend that the English Junior School was born of the Hadow reorganization or that it received its christening in the 1944 Act is really no more than a polite exaggeration. True, there has been no lack of schools attended by children of junior-school age, but this is not the same as to say that the conception of a Junior School has been fully realized. Both the Nursery and Infants' Schools have gone far in the discovery of techniques of training young children which will ensure their maximum developments; but on the whole the Junior Schools have been slow to follow. Harsh as it is, the accusation that "instead of performing its proper and highly important functions of fostering the potentialities of children at an age when their minds are nimble and receptive, their curiosity strong, their imagination fertile and their spirits high, the curriculum is too often cramped and

distorted by over-emphasis on examination subjects and on ways and means of defeating the examiners",<sup>1</sup> is no more than justified. The truth is that the Junior School is not, and never has been, quite in line with the rest of primary education. Because of material difficulties, because the 7-11 years period has always been regarded as an in-between stage, because it has been so much under the thumb of secondary education, the Junior School has had little chance of discovering its proper métier. One can only say of it that today the shape of things to come begins to be a little clearer and that opportunities for making good hopes already too long deferred are better than they were.

At the outset, then, it must be affirmed that the crying need is to ascertain the means whereby an irreproachable theory can be carried into everyday practice. The theory itself may be more or less taken as read.

The gist of the 1931 Report, reinforced and reaffirmed by the more recent Report on Primary Education issued by the Advisory Council on Education in Scotland leaves precious little to argue about on that score. Nevertheless, it remains true that the lack of any thorough-going philosophy still affects the work of most Junior Schools and that, for reasons best known to themselves, most teachers have so far seen fit to pay no more than lip service to proposals which in many ways involve a complete reversal of attitudes and which demand the adoption of new standards of value. This unreadiness to bring established practices into line with modern principles is, no doubt, understandable. After all, most teachers have been trained in certain techniques and their achievements gauged accordingly; they are naturally reluctant to admit that all they have done has been so much wasted effort or that their highest aims fall short of attainable ideals.

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(1) White Paper on Educational Reconstruction (1943).

If it cannot prove it beyond cavil, the main thesis of this book will be to argue, not merely the rightness and desirability, but the sheer necessity of an all-round new approach to the problem of learning and teaching in the Junior School. The trouble is that even when a theory has been universally accepted as valid, the ways and means by which it can be made effective still need to be demonstrated. The great weakness of pronouncements on this subject hitherto has been that they have stated the doctrine in abstract terms and left its fulfilment to the general practitioner without any assistance other than that of pious exhortation. Unless teachers as a body are reasonably persuaded that the changes which they are asked to initiate are at once necessary *and* feasible, we shall not get very far.

As things are, many are holding back because they are not convinced that the steps which they are recommended to take will lead anywhere at all. They own allegiance to conventions which are well-tried and which at least show some measurable results. To put it bluntly, in their view, instruction in Reading, Writing and Arithmetic constitutes the main part of their duties; they can see it as a sizeable, honest job of work. Limited as its aims may be, the aims *are* definite—which (so they think) is more than can be said for some of the practices now invoked in the name of “activities”, “centres of interest” and the like. Acquainted with the newer method only by hearsay, they treat it with reserve or regard it as fancy-fancy stuff which may be all very fine for the “show” school but which hardly accords with classroom conditions as they know them.

And, let us admit it, there are sound reasons for scepticism of this sort. Some of them are set out fairly and squarely in the following letter to the “Times Education Supplement”:

"No sensible person will deny that the introduction of activity methods into the Infants' school has been one of the most vitalizing movements in education. Happiness is, after all, an essential ingredient in educational growth and this has been achieved. There comes a time, however, when ideas of good order and proper conduct are of as much concern to the teacher as is the intellectual growth of the child and when activity must be controlled if it is to be effective. Can it be said that teachers generally are satisfied with the general behaviour of children in school? Are activity methods missing fire somewhere?"

The conception of free activity as a technique in education started in schools where classes were small, where buildings were ample, and where staff were expert. Let us take these three conditions and examine them in relation to the schools as a whole. In most schools today classes are too large. Moreover, the intelligence level may vary from the mentally retarded to the highly intelligent. In classes of this kind the indulgence in free activity makes teaching a nightmare. The naughty boy who does not want to work, the nuisance who likes to interfere with others, and the unintelligent who finds everything confusing are left to their own devices, for no teacher, however expert, can hope to cope under such conditions with more than the interested middle core. The result is a gradual growth of backwardness, a sense of frustration in the teacher, and an increasing tendency on the part of many children to lose control of themselves.

In how many schools of the country are the classrooms big enough? It is a fact that even for ordinary seating few schools have the space they need. To introduce children's activity into confined spaces is to ask for trouble and produces an atmosphere of clash and clamour which is the antithesis of discipline.

Is it not a remarkable fact that in all the pictures about "free activity" there are seldom more than ten children visible and the space they occupy is often four or five times the size of an ordinary classroom?

*We have not yet reached the point when most teachers either believe in or are competent to undertake activity methods in junior classes.* Many are trying to introduce such methods under the impression that they are following the modern trend. The urge to do so comes from the laudable desire to give the children the best technique available. It is open to doubt, however, whether by ignoring the limitations imposed upon schools today, teachers are making a rod for their own backs, are increasing their own difficulties, and creating a school atmosphere which is inimical to the best interests of boys and girls who have to work in a world already badly in need of discipline."<sup>2</sup>

To say that many of the statements here are debatable and that the picture given of activity-schooling is a sad misrepresentation would be to miss the main point, which is contained in the words italicized. What is really worrying this correspondent is perhaps the fear that the values for which the old order of things stood may be set aside for others whose usefulness remains not proven. In this he is not alone. There is today a widespread and growing concern for what is held to be a marked falling-off in educational standards generally. In view of this, are we justified in pressing forward methods which seemingly dispense with set standards and which guarantee no results? May it not be, as the leader-writer commenting on the above letter suggests, that "before the three R's topple—as many of the general public think and fear that they are toppling—from the pedestal on which they have stood for many years, it may be our duty to consider how far we can afford to let

them fall and to examine the wider curriculum in which they now find only a place. For it has to be conceded, however limited the old education may be thought to be, that concentration on the three R's did guarantee a certain reward . . . It is possible that in some schools, the object of activity methods may never have been understood, or, in the excitement of wider curricula, forgotten. The child is stimulated, perhaps, but to what end? He is not, it is said, getting the discipline, or seeing the importance of the grind. If this is so—and it is sufficiently believed to suggest that in places it is—it is a development to be checked."

Both quotations are typical of a certain confusion of thought which is more or less inevitable in an age of transition, when values are shifting and everything is called in question. Such a term as "discipline", for instance, may have quite different meanings for different people. "Free activity" may mean anything at all. As to "standards" who shall decide that we are worse off if it be proved that pupils are no longer so proficient in ratio, proportion or vulgar fractions as they were, say, thirty years ago? Is it not arguable that the attainment levels on which we once prided ourselves were only made possible by artificial pressure and maintained at the expense of other forms of learning? After all, what matters most is not what—nor how much—we know as the manner in which we learn it. Standards of attainment and efficient instruction, desirable as they are, are not everything: more important are the standards which the school sets in self-control, self-knowledge and self-development. Since purpose is best defined as interest in the future and since education is only to be conceived as a continuous process, the Junior School should not be limited by short-term requirements, nor should it feel in duty bound to reach certain attainment levels merely because they are expected of it. In the event,

we shall see that the adoption of activity methods, even under the most cramping conditions, need result in no loss of efficiency in the three R's and in no way implies a dereliction of the teacher's duties. Rather the reverse. For when all is said and done, there is no getting away from the fact that teaching by subjects is a mode of instruction which, though it may be appropriate for the older boys and girls, "does not always correspond with the child's unsystematised but eager interest in the people and things of a world still new to him."<sup>3</sup>

It is conceivable that enthusiasm for the cause of learning by doing has overflowed into places where its usefulness is not so obvious and that the implications of a curriculum "thought of in terms of activity and experience" have not been sufficiently thought out. Such objections, however, need not deter us from believing that the method is singularly appropriate—the one and only method, indeed—for children between the ages of 7 and 11.

Unfortunately, because it is a long-term policy with dividends which are not immediately returnable, the new approach is hardly likely to recommend itself to teachers of the hard-headed school. Common sense and caution prompt them to fight shy of changes in which the last state is not demonstrably better than the first. Not unnaturally, they have no wish to abandon methods which are clearly understood for others which are comparatively untried. Very rightly, they are contemptuous of those who seek to curry favour with officialdom merely because they are under the impression that "activities are the thing." They prefer to wait upon events, biding their time until some clearer lead is forthcoming.

It is clear from all this that a host of doubts and misconceptions must be cleared up and a good deal of passive

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(3) Report on the Primary School (1931).

resistance broken down before the new advocacy can gain much headway. What is needed is not so much a lead from above, as a more vital sense of purpose and direction on the part of the individual teacher. Unless the change-of-heart springs from a deep-seated conviction and a genuine realization of the need, there is bound to be an element of chicanery in any conversion. Visits to schools, where "activity and experience" are already the key-note of the work, might go a long way to convince the doubting Thomases of the profession; but such schools are as yet few and far between and opportunities for cross-fertilization rarer still. Lectures, short courses and summer schools are not without their influences; though the part which they can play is, at best, limited. In addition there are the Training Colleges which will, no doubt, in the fullness of time produce a generation of teachers who are alive to the exciting possibilities of life in the Junior School.

In the meantime there is another alternative, the gospel of the written word—which is the author's sole excuse for thinking that a book setting out the pros and cons of the present situation may serve a useful purpose. It is up to everyone who works in the Junior School to think out for himself all the implications of his calling, and to think hard. How far-reaching those implications are, and of what critical importance, we shall endeavour to show.

## II. THE CASE FOR EXPERIENCE

*"Experientia docet"* is a hoary motto, almost as commonplace as the saying that "We live and learn." Why, then, should it be thought that the activity-principle is the latest educational fad and how is it that the junior child's personal experience has been so rigidly excluded from the life of the schools?

Without harping too much on a criticism which has been made many times, there can be no doubt that "it is when we come to the years of life covered by the Junior School period that we find common practice lagging far behind the articulation of the principles of education in nursery and infant work . . . Throughout the Primary Schools of the country there is a radical need for the reorientation of the curriculum in order to meet the needs of the children at the most stable period of their growth."<sup>1</sup>

Just what principles are these in the observance of which the Junior School is said so flagrantly to fail? Briefly, they may be defined as a willingness to leave the child's development more and more (though by no means entirely) to his own self-activity and to impose as little as possible in the way of adult requirement and direction. For obvious reasons it is not practical politics to order the three-year-old to do this or that; and to a lesser degree the same is true of all infants. Willy-nilly, the Nursery and Infant Schools have been compelled to take notice of the psychological needs of the children—in other words, to treat them as little people in their own right—and the result has been that the formal ordering of the work usually associated with school-life has largely disappeared. Because teachers

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(1) *The Content of Education: Interim Report, Society for Curriculum Reform*, 58.

in these schools came to their work without preconceived notions of what was to be expected from the children, because there was little or no insistence on what they must be made to do or learn, a more intimate *modus vivendi* was evolved. In the Nursery, for example, it was not possible to arrange the children as a "class." The conventional grouping broke down for the very good reason that, being unnatural, it was also unworkable. Instead of handling them collectively, a more personal relationship between teacher and pupil had to be devised; and in the process it was found that what the child did for itself, by itself and of its own accord was in the long run more significant than anything which the teacher could do on its behalf. That, very crudely, was the secret of the Nursery and Infants' Schools' success.

Against this it can be argued that, while it may be safe to leave so much to freedom and self-activity in the earliest years, the organization of the Junior School must, from the start, be conditioned by more practical considerations. It may be thought also that while a psychological interpretation of the learner's needs is well enough in its way, it is not the whole story. In any case, to allow pupils to do what they please when and how they please is no solution at all, even if it were practicable. "Children are not always good judges of educational value. They tend to choose the easiest tasks which seem most profitable at the moment. In education a long view is often essential. What is easiest at the moment, like counting on the fingers or using a typewriter with one finger and a thumb, may be positively harmful in later years when a high degree of skill is required. Moreover it is very doubtful whether we ought to remove all difficulties from a child's occupation. Effort is essential for full development."<sup>2</sup>

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(2) A. Pinson: *Principles of Teaching Method*, 57.

That is well said. Elsewhere, discussing the question of motivation, the same writer offers this further comment: "It seems to have been assumed that children must always be kept in a condition of ecstatic excitement, and if they are not, that the teaching is poor. It is this particular aspect of the doctrines of interest which has earned the suspicion if not the contempt of many discerning practical teachers and is the real ground for the objections to 'soft pedagogy'."<sup>3</sup>

While bearing this caveat in mind, however, it must be agreed that, both in content and method, the Junior School's curriculum is not altogether in sympathy with the aptitudes of the children and that many features in it, long thought of as essential, have ceased to be compelling. Sooner or later changes in the educational outlook are influenced by social and economic changes. Unless the school moves with the times, reflecting the conditions of the world about it, it must in one way or other be divorced from reality. And there are many signs that the Junior School is so divorced. Not only in this country, either. In America, so we are told, "it has been so set apart, so isolated from the ordinary motives of life that the place where children are sent for discipline is the one place in the world where it is most difficult to get experience—the mother of all disciplines worth the name."<sup>4</sup>

Before going on, the meaning of this word "experience" needs to be pondered. It is so vague, and employed in such a wide variety of contents, that unless we are extremely careful we shall find ourselves repeating it as an empty shibboleth. Learning the 9-times table is an experience and so is falling in love—or falling under a bus. If it is to be used in writing of educational theory the term must hold a more precise meaning than that. Rightly to understand it, we

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(3) Op. cit. 6.

(4) J. Dewey: *The School and Society*, 15.

need to set it against the whole background of traditions and principles in English education.

Ever since the Renaissance, the expansion of Western culture has been founded on strictly rational principles. It has been assumed that the one faculty which distinguishes mankind from the brute creation is the intellectual. Accordingly education has concentrated its efforts on training the intelligence, regulating the learner's behaviour from a single growing-point—the mental. Other kinds of awareness :

" Those obstinate questionings  
 Of sense and outward things,  
 Fallings from us, vanishings  
 Dark misgivings of a creature  
 Moving about in worlds not realized,  
 High instincts before which our mortal nature  
 Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised—"

have been largely ignored. Only now does it begin to appear that the great error of humanism has lain in placing too implicit a faith in the capabilities of the brain as an instrument for attaining the good life; and that the self-sufficiency of humanum genus is something which can no longer be taken for granted. In a word, "the function of the discursive intelligence is that of a servant and we have made a God of it."<sup>5</sup> One consequence which was not foreseen was that any attempt to confine human life to the mental plane must ultimately result in a kind of spiritual ineptitude. The humanist tradition, born of the Faustian ideal, might produce free-thinkers of unrivalled brilliance : it could never, by itself, produce the full man.

In addition, a puritanical streak in our national character has conspired towards the same end; we have always regarded the purpose of schooling as a glorification of the intellect and a disciplining (as often as not by suppression)

(5) L. Hyde: *Prospects of Humanism*, 35.

of those other faculties which, because they are non-intellectual, are accounted inferior if not actually sinful. How common and how deep-seated this latter belief is may be seen in the attitude of mind which suspects that something must surely be wrong if the children are too-obviously enjoying themselves in school. The acquirement of knowledge, it is sometimes thought, must necessarily be a painful business: therefore it is a waste of time and a betrayal of the school's trust if the little so-and-sos' noses are not kept well and truly to the grindstone of facts and figures. If what they are forced to learn is so much plaster on a wall and fails to stick, no matter (so the argument runs)—the course of studies to which they have been subjected has a disciplinary value in itself. If the pupils have not greatly profited by it, at least they have been kept out of mischief and safeguarded against their primitive natures. If they have learned nothing else, they have "learned to value the grind"—or so it is hoped.

To return to the broader issue. The original assumption of humanism, that man is, or ought to become, essentially a rational creature, contained a deadly fallacy. Even the highest of intellectual processes cannot be dissociated from impulses and emotions that are non-rational. "Pure" thought is never the prime-mover of behaviour, whatever its uses may be in controlling action and feeling. Intelligence is only the means by which the mind attains ends which are suggested and instigated by the so-called "lower" impulses. That desire should always come first is unreasonable, granted, but there it is. For that matter faith is unreasonable and, if only we are fair-minded enough to admit it, so is the whole nature of human experience.

Now there are reasons to think that the undue emphasis which has been placed on the intellectual faculty is at the root of the malaise which afflicts our 20th century civiliz-

ation. A teaching which has applied itself so unreservedly to mental training has somehow failed to satisfy the learner's inner needs. Being applied to the body and brain, it has been two-dimensional, taking little or no account of those other aspects which go to make the full personality. Some thinkers have gone so far as to diagnose a progressive break-up of human personality in the modern world. Whether or not this tendency towards dehumanization is a serious threat is not to be argued here : but it seems clear enough that many of the frustrations and maladjustments of our time are attributable to just this cause. "Synthesis", "integration", "total education"—these are the catchwords of an age which knows more about life and less about living than any before it. What is required, it appears, is nothing less than a re-interpretation of human destiny.

Does all this sound remote and high-faluting? and what has it to do with primary education? Everything. The crux of the matter is contained in the 1931 Report's acknowledgement that "the schools, whose first intention was to teach children how to read, have been compelled to broaden their aims until it might be said that they have to teach children how to live . . ." but, as the Report is careful to point out, "this profound change of purpose has been accepted with a certain unconscious reluctance and a consequent slowness of adaptation. The schools, feeling that what they can do best is the familiar business of imparting knowledge, have reached a high level of technique in that part of their functions but have not clearly grasped its proper relation to the whole."

Exactly : and it is precisely this relationship and sense of wholeness which is wanting in our modern civilization. How can it be secured? Only by turning the focus of attention to those other human faculties which hitherto have suffered neglect or downright disparagement; by putting first things

first, which means beginning with the heart instead of the head; by looking upon the child, not as a receptacle for knowledge that is *given* rather than *gained*, but as an organism growing in many dimensions. If the relationship between the part played by the growing intelligence and the growing personality is ever to be grasped, a complete change of outlook will first be required of the teacher. For one thing he will no longer be entirely at liberty to decide in advance that the young learner shall be conditioned in this or that way. Instead, he will bring himself to acknowledge that what the child learns by himself and from his fellows is far more important in the long run than what he picks up from "lessons," no matter how carefully prepared. Moreover, the teacher will need to credit these youngsters with the ability to do a great many things which hitherto he has wanted to do for them. This in itself involves some stepping down from pedagogic pedestals, yet in no way does it imply any loss of dignity nor that the teacher's function is a whit the less important than before—only that it needs to be less obtrusive and arbitrary. If an all-round education of juniors is to be achieved, we adults must wear our seniority with a difference, with far greater modesty than has been our wont.

What, then, is meant by an all-round education? We have said that a two-dimensional training (that is one which fills the head and feeds the body) is inadequate. It is inadequate because it leaves out of the account those other faculties—*Sensation, Emotion and Intuition*—which are the chief determining forces in human conduct. If such a statement seems outrageous, we need only reflect that in all the important things in life it is not what we *think* but the way we *feel* that matters most. Possession of a stupendous I.Q. has nothing to do with a fellow's falling in love at first sight (and may not even prevent his making a fool of himself!) In the same way, the *aesthete* knows in a flash whether this

painting is a masterpiece or not, no matter what critical judgments he may adduce afterwards in order to account for his appreciation. In both cases, the behaviour is initiated by forces which can only be described as non-rational.

Let us be quite clear at the start that there is here no question of debunking the intellect. The last thing we want is to exalt a raw emotionalism or lose ourselves in a mumbo-jumbo mystique of the irrational. *Of course* the possession of a first-class brain will always be an advantage. *Of course* we shall always need to exercise our critical powers and order our lives, so far as we can, as rational beings. The point is that the basis which underlies all our experience is itself non-rational. The governing factors of conduct remain unconscious, no matter how they are directed and modified by the interplay of a conscious intelligence. If we are to achieve an all-round education, we must ensure that the rational outlook is based on the right foundations and this can only be done by allowing free-play to primal feelings and impulses. It cannot be done by cultivating intelligence for its own sake.

Now all the evidence goes to show that the junior's response to life is not primarily mental. It is an undifferentiated response, in which feeling, sensation, intuition and thought are fused as one: or, to put it another way, the child's awareness is not localised in the brain to anything like the same extent as it is among grown-ups. For us communication occurs readily enough through the media of the spoken and written word. Not for him. Piaget has shown how strangely limited is the child's capacity for understanding speech. For him, meaning comes more directly and vividly through quite different channels, through physical movement, through sight, through the exercise of unconscious impulses, through contacts and sympathies to which it is not always possible to put a name. This being

so, it is vital that the school should provide the conditions and the atmosphere in which communication of this sort can occur.

Everyone knows how inarticulate the young child can be, how much we need to read between the lines if we are to understand what he is trying to convey. How often do we reverse the roles and realise how woefully incapable we are of making ourselves understood to the child? If Piaget's findings are correct, and there is no reason to suppose otherwise, then the amount of time and effort wasted under the reign of chalk-and-talk must be quite frightening. Not that the issue here is merely one of averting inefficiency in instructional methods. What we are really concerned about is to argue the need for allowing scope for a variety of communications outside the normal ones of speech and writing.

From a practical point of view the great difficulty is that these "other faculties" are not obviously educable. You cannot arrange a balanced course in sense-training. You cannot (usefully) give instruction in emotional-control. As for intuition, not being attainable by any effort of will, it is even chancier than the rest. And yet, if we are to trust Spinoza or Bergson (themselves logicians of the first magnitude), intuition provides us with the most direct access to truth which is open to human beings. It has been called "an immediate awareness . . . of some particular entity without such aid from the senses as would account for that awareness,"<sup>6</sup> the sudden realization and conviction of rightness that comes (as we say) "in a flash," "without thinking." In the final analysis it is the knowledge of good and evil, the insight which is the source of religion. Dare we overlook it, simply because we know so little about it and cannot control it?

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(6) H. Wild: *Intuition*, 226.

These are deep waters, in which the metaphysician as well as the plain teacher is likely to find himself out of his depth but if the Junior School is to find its proper studies it is important that the vastness of the problems facing it should be stated, even though they admit of no here-and-now solution. For too long it has been assumed that all is plain-sailing in the Junior School and that its only aim is "a straightforward affair, confinable to a single objective, limited and definite."<sup>7</sup> If only it were as simple as that! So long as the purposes of education were one-sidedly intellectual such a definition of aims might have held good. Our present conception is more ambitious and correspondingly more difficult of attainment. What we look for, ultimately, is nothing less than an educational way-of-life in which thought, feeling, sensation, imagination and intuition will join forces as equals.

At present the possibility of such a collaboration can scarcely be entertained, let alone arranged. That is not the same as admitting that it is impossible. In effect, the child shows us the secret in his daily life and that is why the child's self-revelation must be taken as the real arbiter. Once again we need to remind ourselves that we have as much to learn from the child as he has from us. Primary education should be a two-way process, between equal partners. Before it can become so, there must be some stepping down from his high-and-mighty position on the teacher's part and more give-and-take between reason and unreason than he has been prepared to allow in the past. He must adjust his mind to many ideas which will at first strike him as unconventional, surprising, at times even shocking to complacency. Not every teacher will be able to make this adjustment unreservedly, certainly not those for whom the only yardstick and divining rod is the intelligence test. Since the uses of

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(7) F. H. Spencer: *Education for the People*, Introduction.

intelligence are only part of the story, how narrow and mean must be the attitude of mind which regards them as the be-all and the end-all of education. And how far removed from the facts of life!

### III. THE CASE FOR ACTIVITY.

Once we have made up our minds about the child's need for experience, the next step is to consider how the school can best cater for it and in a wide variety of contexts. "I came that ye might have life and have it in abundance," said Christ; and the Junior School should at all times strive to fulfil no lesser intention. We have already spoken of "activities"—another of those catchwords of educational jargon with which great play is made nowadays—but it cannot be emphasised too heavily that no activity can be purposeful unless it is suggested by, and arises out of, some felt need. Strictly speaking, we put the cart before the horse in speaking of "activity and experience." Indissociable as the two are, the experience must come first.

Since circumstances alter cases and since, in every case, the environment has an important part to play, it is clear that each Junior School will need to work out its particular solution of the general problem of a curriculum "thought of in terms of activity and experience." If no over-all or hard-and-fast rules can be given, however, there are certain guiding principles which need to be observed.

The first is that the curriculum must be conceived as an integral part of primary education, the implication being that the real affinities of the Junior School are with the Infants' and Nursery Schools rather than with the secondary stage. Admittedly these four years which the Junior School covers lead on to the Secondary School, but no useful purpose will be served by regarding them as a bridge-passage. Far better, surely, to look upon 11 plus as the culmination of a full and happy childhood.

Such a principle may seem gratuitous, yet it is one that needs to be stated and kept constantly in view. Too often

the Junior School feels itself sandwiched between the infants and seniors, as if its own children were neither fish nor flesh. "It looks before and after and pines for what is not." Caught between opposing claims, it has never felt itself free to grant a "full and active life not dominated by external standards," nor to recognise that every stage of life should be lived for its own sake and according to its own lights. Yet if the psychologists are to be believed when they say that childhood is the make-or-break period in each and every individual life-history there can be no more important consideration. It was the fear of violating the child's self-hood in the early years that led Rousseau to go whole-hog and aver that the only rule for teaching children below the age of 10 was not to attempt it. Living as we do in the modern world, we are not in a position to accept this theory of negative education at its face value, but we can at least recognise the element of truth which it contains. Childhood is at all times to be respected. The 1944 Act recognises as much when it declares that the whole aim of education shall be "to contribute to the full development of our scholars by efficient education, *the nature of the instruction and training being determined by the age, aptitudes and abilities of the children.*" Again, in the Ministry's view, the duty of the Junior School "will be to make the fullest use of the lively interest at this stage in their personal achievements and their active curiosity about the world around them."

It will be objected that all this may be well-meaning, but that it is too vague and woolly to be of use to the teacher in the classroom. Maybe so; but it is as well to remember that a curriculum is something more than a syllabus; that, besides having content, it is a mode of living.

Even so, the content itself is important and we cannot evade the question: What shall be taught? Before answering it, however, we need to remind ourselves of the danger

of deciding out of hand what is best for the child. Being sworn to caution and modesty, we cannot claim infallibility nor any kind of divine right in determining his future. On the other hand, because of his helplessness, there are many needful things that he cannot be left to find out for himself.

Suppose we begin by asking what most parents want and expect of their children by the time they reach the age of 11 plus. To be able to read for information and for pleasure, to write plain English, to express themselves freely in speech, to cope with simple practical calculations, to work and play by themselves and with others—and to work hard when necessary—to fear no man but to be God-fearing, to be healthy in mind and body? All these, yes, but there is more besides. Above all, we want the children *to be themselves*; and unless we want this hard enough we shall not get the others.

There follows a second principle. Right at the start it is evident that the curriculum must satisfy two quite distinct claims. On the one hand it has to recognise and satisfy the spontaneous, personal impulses of the child: on the other it has to meet the practical requirements of everyday life. The first might be called an inner, and the second an outer, claim. How can it best strike a balance between the two? So far no satisfactory answer to this all-important question has been given. The 1933 Report on Infants' and Nursery Schools averred that in their case the curriculum "must make a delicate compromise between the immediate powers and needs of the child and his future requirements as a potential adult," but no similar pronouncement appeared in the 1931 Primary School Report. Possibly the Consultative Committee felt that so far as the Junior School was concerned the issue was already decided! On the same point, the Scottish Report on Primary Education was somewhat equivocal, for while maintaining that "curriculum

and methods should follow the child's natural line of development," it was still conservative enough to hold "that while the child is receiving the richest of all gifts it is in our power to bestow—*a literary education* that will give him the power of communication not only with the whole of the present world but with the past and the future—we should not destroy or needlessly impair those primitive powers and graces, those qualities of initiative, curiosity, ingenuity and self-dependence that are *also* an essential part of his heritage."<sup>1</sup>

For ourselves, we should infinitely prefer to dispense with the richest of all gifts (including communication with the world of the future!) if only we could be sure of possessing initiative, ingenuity and self-dependence. When it comes to assessing the modicum of useful knowledge which the child must receive from us and comparing it with what he can get for himself, we are under no illusions as to which is the greater contribution.

Yet the conditions of everyday life are such that there are certain techniques and forms of knowledge which must be taught regardless of whether or not youngsters evince any desire for them. Left to themselves, just how many of them would "pick up" the reading habit or facility in number? In much the same way such off-the-syllabus details as the rule of the road, the knack of handling a knife and fork or how to tell the time cannot safely be left to look after themselves : the "how" and "why" must be shown. No doubt there is something to be said for not pressing children to learn any of these things until they show signs of being eager and ready to begin. In Primary education a late start is always better than a premature one. Whatever happens, even if the need is not one that the child can feel immedi-

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(1) Primary Education : A Report of the Advisory Council on Education for Scotland, p. 21 (*Italics mine*).

ately, it should always be made plain to him *why* knowledge of this sort is expected of him. For the 7-year-old doing sums can be quite as satisfactory an experience as playing with a pet rabbit or painting, provided that the incentive is there; otherwise it is apt to become a meaningless routine.

If there is no sense of purpose in the work it will not make sense to the child. Most teachers know this to their cost. Consider, as a typical example, the case of the 9-year-old boy who, though otherwise normal and perfectly intelligent, could not be made to read. "Look-and-say" and phonic methods, private coaching—everything was tried and everything failed. Comics left him cold; all he was interested in was the circus, in clowns and acrobats and conjurors. Particularly conjurors. As a last resort, and out of her own pocket, his distracted teacher bought the lad a box of conjuring tricks, complete with instructions, and left him to get on with them as best he could. That did it! At once the impasse was broken—he just *had* to be able to read in order to understand the instructions!

The trouble with the three R's and all utility studies is that the incentive must always be, so to speak, external to the subject matter. They do not satisfy any spontaneous impulse as do painting and handwork or music and movement: therefore any interest in them must to some extent be artificially induced. In the bad old days of the free-place scholarship system the inducement was ready-made. Children were sent to school in order to "get on" and the desire for self-advancement supplied the only stimulus that was thought necessary. Now that a less stringent atmosphere pervades the schools this unnatural forcing is giving way to easier conditions which allow each child to work at his own rate of progress. Even in the case of Arithmetic and Reading—subjects which must be taught and which are not so obviously amenable to activity methods—the impetus of a

self-found purpose transforms the whole learning-situation. "The need for the skills of learning becomes apparent to the child. He has a purpose of his own for which to read, write and reckon. Moreover his self-respect and the desire to grow up urge him to gain these skills."<sup>2</sup>

Apart from the knowledge required for the practical purposes of everyday life, however, there are a host of activities in which all children naturally delight and which have little or no reference to the conventional schemes of school work. On the principle that it is better to go with the stream rather than against it, it seems reasonable to put the primal needs of children first and to regard the requirements of society as a secondary consideration. And provided that adequate standards in the basic skills are maintained, there can be no objection to such a decision. To put it bluntly, teachers ought to be sufficiently competent to ensure that every normal child gains a mastery of "the elementary difficulties of reading, writing and arithmetic as they are required for dealing with everyday matters" without being under pain of grinding away for five hours a day and five days a week at nothing else. Seen in their proper perspective, the three R's are only a part (and in our view a comparatively insignificant part), of the junior curriculum. The amount of time devoted to them must necessarily be considerable, but it ought never to be preponderant. If the instruction be efficient, there is no reason why the proportion between "teacher's time" and "children's time" should not be fifty-fifty.

Children's time . . . If it is to be well spent, we must know more about the essential motives of juniors; and here again we find ourselves up against a difficulty in that there is no clear indication that the 7 to 11 plus years constitute a definite period. At 7 the child is something more than an

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(2) H. M. Berry: The Junior School. (Journal of Education, May, 1945.)

infant, at 11 plus something less than an adolescent. Though there are several common characteristics, the range of transition between the two is so vast, that it is almost impossible to generalize. The truth is that this sector of the school life has been arrived at largely as a result of administrative convenience and that attempts to justify it on psychological grounds are accordingly apt to be a little far-fetched.

Even so, and without resorting to such terms as "Latency," "Pre-adolescence" and the like (the old fashioned words "boyhood" and "girlhood" will serve the turn just as well) it appears that there are a number of junior characteristics which are quite outstanding; and it is in accordance with these peculiar qualities that the curriculum should mainly be devized.

Most books and every report on the subject of the Junior School include a special chapter under some such heading as "Characteristics of Junior Children" and having sketched in the rough details, pass on to the serious business of discussing problems of school organization—almost as if the two could be considered in isolation. There is no point in recapitulating what has already been written in this connection (or lack of connection), except to say that the opinion given in the 1931 Report "that the full significance of the period between 7 and 11 has hitherto not been adequately understood" remains as valid as ever.

"We've finished that. Can we do this now?" This zest and freshness, this insatiable clamour to be up and doing—what is the secret of it? "Never in the rest of his life will he be so busy as he is now," said Rousseau of the young Emile; and never, anywhere, will the teacher have in his charge pupils more willing, more energetic or more enthusiastic than those to be found in the Junior School. If he dismisses this exuberant well-being as mere excess of animal spirits he will not only fail to understand its true meaning:

he will miss his mightiest opportunity. Juniors are so matter-of-fact, so apparently normal that it is all-too easy to fall into the error of thinking that they are easily understood. The infant is cryptic and therefore fascinating; the adolescent's problems are so obvious that they draw attention, but comparatively few psychologists have thought it worth their while to make any special study of juniors. Nor is it wholly unjust to assert that in the past most educationists have more or less taken them for granted.

Since we have taken our stand by the principle that the learner's personal needs are to come first, it follows that we must consider child-study and curriculum—planning as being but different aspects of what is essentially the same problem. From this point of view, then, it may be convenient to review the special characteristics of the 7 to 11 years period — physical, social, emotional, imaginative and spiritual—provided that at the same time we note the various corollaries which they signify.

On the physical side, increase of muscular strength and control bring a growing sense of independence and self-assurance. Probably for the first time, the youngster wakes up to the discovery that he is capable of confronting life on something like terms of equality, that the world is no longer a place to be shunned. Now at last he can stand on his own feet and do things for himself. Mummy's apron strings are gradually loosening. All that he sees is brand-new, a brave new world and he is filled with wonder at it. He is very much the healthy young animal, delighting in movement not only for its own sake, but for the opportunities it gives him for speed, deftness and skill. All his senses are acute, tuned to concert pitch. Indeed his sense of touch is said to be superior to that of most adults. In a way his whole awareness and response to life is physical : it has the same intensity as a bird's—and for the same reason, that it is not over-

hampered with thought. "O for a life of sensation rather than of thought," yearned Keats, and if only we hark back far enough into our own childhoods we shall recall some traces of the same envy. The junior is, in fact, the complete kinæsthete, expressing what he thinks and feels in terms of his body. Sitting still and having nothing to do are slow-torture to him, or worse, slow-poison. He is essentially a creature of action, the Happy Warrior in miniature.

On the emotional side, we have already anticipated his chief characteristic, which is his capacity for amazed curiosity. If his naivety strikes us as wonderful it is because he is so filled with wonder at the startling freshness of the world. Though without obvious stresses or complications, his emotional reactions are by no means as overt as they are sometimes taken to be. Taken at their face value, it might appear that their range is decidedly limited. Certainly he seems to have little use for complex emotions or the finer feelings. He is the least squeamish person in the world and will watch a sheep being slaughtered or a road accident, recounting the gory details afterwards with a kind of unholy relish. To suppose that on this account he is insensitive and no better than a philistine would be to mistake him entirely: the point is that his lust for experience is so strong that he simply has no time for subtlety or finesse. His appetite for life is so enormous that he is content to bolt it raw. It is not true that he is matter-of-fact. What is true is that fact matters most to him—and matters tremendously. He is absorbingly interested in things, in the world about him, and strangely utilitarian in his values. For him a cup is what you drink out of, whether it be a chipped crock or a priceless porcelain. Throughout the four years there is a notable progression from fantasy to realism, from make-belief to the practical. At 7 the late infant is still more than half in love with day-dreams and play pretence, one

for whom the real and the unreal are not always readily distinguishable. From 9 to 11 he is nothing like so content with imagined situations : the bit of wood which once served him as a toy gun is thrown aside—what he wants now is the genuine article or failing that the next best thing. In all his imitations he is constantly trying to get as near to the original as possible—and how he loves to ape us adults ! For the same reason he is curious to know about, and to handle, mechanical contrivances, in particular to find out about their uses and the way they work. He never tires of asking questions about the why and wherefore of the material world. As for the world of living things, it appeals to him hugely, but chiefly because in it he may satisfy his craving for adventure and exploration.

What attracts him more than anything else in the living world, however, is the society of his fellows. Here, too, his development undergoes marked changes, which may be considered as falling into three fairly distinct phases :—1, the ego-centric or individualist phase; 2, the “pair” phase and 3, the “gang” phase. It will, of course, be understood that these three are in no way mutually exclusive and do not necessarily coincide with mental or chronological ages. Differences of sex, temperament, upbringing and other variable factors make it impossible to state a general rule and inadvisable to look for one. Thus, girls are usually fonder of going about in pairs than boys, the lonesome type of child may never get beyond the first phase, and even the most enthusiastic member of the gang remains at heart a confirmed individualist. Still, though juniors are “everything by starts and nothing long,” switching from one sort of behaviour to another at a moment’s notice, it remains broadly true that the gregarious impulse grows stronger throughout the period. In passing, it is worth noting that if anything the tendency is towards segregation. Boys and

girls show less and less interest in one another; and as sex differences become more apparent so the gap between their self-appointed fun and games grows progressively wider.

The infant is usually described as being non-social, wrapped up in his own little affairs. Though the junior is more objective in his attitudes, it is fair to say that he, too, has not yet reached the stage of being truly social. In his different way, he is every bit as selfish (or should it be self-regarding?) as the infant. If there is a change, it is that he is more outward-looking than he was. The world is his oyster, and if he enjoys the company of others it is only that he may have their assistance in getting at its contents. That is why he is such a respecter of adults, only too glad to fall in with any lead that will help him to find what he is after; for, indeed, this world of his is so bewilderingly crowded with novelties—there is so much to see and do—that he hardly knows where to begin or which way to turn. Home and the family circle are no longer big enough to satisfy his widening range of interests: more and more he looks to the school to answer his ceaseless questionings. Failing that, he takes to the great outdoors, rip-roaring around the streets of an evening, hunting the hedgerows for birds' eggs or squatting on a railway bridge to note the numbers of locomotives. In all his games he evinces a strong spirit of rivalry—the sturdy independence of the confirmed individualist. His feats of prowess are intended for his own satisfaction—there is never a trace in them of that self-subordination which is called for in true team-spirit. He is intolerant of rules and at 11 plus is only beginning to appreciate the need for them in organized games. Watch any eleven of 9-year-olds at football; they are more like a pack of wolves than a side! This assertiveness is displayed in other directions as rivalry, showing-off or downright pugnacity; but it is all part of the same aggressive front to life. And yet his make-up is so

impulsive, his moods so fluctuant, that one moment he may act the bully and the next become a tame follower in the gang. Likewise with his enthusiasms—they flare up suddenly like spirits tossed on a fire and as suddenly peter out, to be transferred to other interests equally as fleeting. Always he is on the move, restless as a leaf in the wind, agog with excitement; rarely or never listless. Whatever he does is done with zest, with an eye only to the vivid moment and never a thought (or at most an impatient one) for the outcome. Even in his free-time activities, his attention span is apt to be brief, and yet they reveal a steady increase in conscious purpose, provided that the purpose is obvious and can be quickly achieved. At 7 he indulged in play as such, but as time goes on he looks for some tangible result from his efforts at self-amusement. It is not activity for the sake of activity that he wants now so much as genuine occupation; nor was his character ever better described than as a "little workman looking for jobs to do." He loves nothing better than making things, no matter how makeshift. Best of all, he likes to feel that what he has succeeded in knocking together will serve a practical purpose and that it really and truly belongs to him. Maybe there is scant pride in the craftsmanship but very great pride in the personal achievement and still more in the personal ownership. For about this time his sense of possession begins to be pronounced. Among other things, it makes a collector of him, hoarder of foreign stamps and cards and ill-considered trifles too numerous for any inventory.

On the mental side, what shall we say, except that towards the close of the period and then only among a minority, juniors remain supremely non-intellectual? As the range of interests widens so differences in aptitude and ability become more discernible. At its upper end, the school may have to accommodate its curriculum to anything from

near mental deficiency to I.Q.'s of 130 and upwards. But, since the junior's proper studies are by no means all preoccupied with brainwork it by no means follows that classes must, or ought to be, "streamed." The claims of the brilliant minority who earmark themselves for an academic future cannot be set aside, but they should not be allowed to take priority over the majority. Which means that a more fluid grouping, in which children of mixed abilities as well as children of different ages, if necessary, is required.

Because they are so alert and at the same time so wide open to suggestion, it is not difficult to get juniors to undergo all sorts of mental drills and to perform abstract exercises that would be accounted drudgery by older pupils. Juniors are said to be good at memory work and, possibly because of a primitive love of rhythm and ritual, they take readily to repetition and learning by rote. As a consequence, it was for many years assumed that the Junior School was the place par excellence where the tedious business of getting over the groundwork of education could best be undertaken; and to some extent the logic of the assumption has to be admitted. But to make too much of it, exploiting the child's willingness to put up with any treatment, may be as dangerous as it is unjustifiable. Such methods are sadly out of touch with the learner's real needs. We have said that the junior is primarily and consumingly interested in *things*, and with the advance towards realism there comes a desire for *facts*, but facts that are not related to his own experience cannot but be meaningless to him. His mind is so exercised with actualities and practical considerations that mental reckonings alone cut precious little ice. For him a stone is the weight of the bag of flour that mother buys. A foot is the length of his ruler (as for most of us a chain is, and always will be, the length of a cricket pitch.) For the 7-year-old, addition and subtraction are mysteries that cannot be

understood until he has felt the truth of the matter, literally, in his bones. The long and short of it is that knowledge of facts and figures cannot be absorbed into the mental system until experience of the things for which they stand has first been realised. At 10 plus, when most boys and girls are making rapid progress in reading for information, meaning still comes more directly and abundantly through handling, hearing and seeing. By that age, the junior is not entirely incapable of deductive and inductive reasoning, but to pretend that he is in any sense of the word a thinker would be going too far. His world is still not a logical world, though it is beginning to shape that way. Such thought as he has time for remains particular and concrete. Generalities are not for him. (All the more reason, therefore, why it is "important that the school's subjects should not be isolated and labelled in separate compartments of the time-table but should be treated in close relation to the child's concrete experience.")<sup>3</sup>

From an imaginative point of view the junior is a curious mixture of callousness and sensitivity. At the risk of repeating ourselves, we must insist that he is essentially a *kinaesthete* *not* an *aesthete*. He is as uncritical of his drawings and paintings as he is of the rough-hewn woodwork models and the rest of his work. He will respond with evident enjoyment to good music, preferably if there is something for him to do meanwhile, but he is not really disposed to listen with much discernment or appreciation until he has passed the age of 10. He has no use for passive listening nor for concentrating on the music alone. He must respond by beating time with fingers or feet, moving to the rhythm (a kind of suppressed dance, pitiful to see when one knows what might become of it) or joining in with the melody. Similarly with art and craft—it is the opportunity for

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(3) Consultative Committee's Report, 44.

creative expression that is the source of delight. With such activities he feels at home. Intuitively, he realises that they are what he wants to do, and can do : and it is a sure instinct which prompts him to apply himself wholeheartedly to them whenever the chance presents itself.

So far, we have had nothing to say of the child's spiritual development for the good reason that it is not very revealing. In most respects the picture we have drawn is that of a little primitive, a care-free savage, a pagan "barbarous in beauty." We have said that ideals have no place in his outlook on life, but this is not to say that in his innocence he is debarred from truths that we grown-ups grope after through the inadequate medium of words. For all we can tell, he may be nearer to revelation than we are. (Wordsworth was neither the first nor the last to be convinced of this.) Juniors are great lovers of ritual and the fact that they cannot understand the simpler things in life, let alone those that defy intellectual comprehension, is not such a disadvantage as might be thought. Rather the reverse. Now, at the time when the child's character is in its inchoate stage, is he most ripe for conviction. All he needs is example. If he does not get it the failure lies at the door of the home, the school or the church, never in himself. Because he is so suggestible, and since sympathy (or fellow-feeling), infects his daily life so strongly, an act of corporate worship can do more for him in a moment than years of Bible stories and all the agreed syllabuses that ever caused controversy. But like everything else in the Junior School it must be an *act*, with the children contributing their meed of praise. The very fact that under the conventional subject-division, religion boils down to nothing better than an instructional syllabus—"Scripture" or "Religious knowledge"—is the clearest vindication of all that activity-approach stands for.

What does it all amount to, this unequalled gusto and spirited attack on life? Is it all as pointless as it once seemed? Sheer animal spirits? Is it not evident that what we have to reckon with in the child's behaviour is the existence of an inner development governed by imperatives over which we can have at best no more than an indirect control? Without subscribing to this or that brand of psychology, we must agree in thinking of the junior less as a *recipient* and more as an *agent*. This is not to say that he is to be left without any form of guidance or control, only to admit the futility of trying to "teach the young idea how to shoot." In effect, we can no more do that than we can instruct the apple tree to bear fruit. The most we can do is to prepare the ground and leave it to grow.

Whichever way we look at it, it appears that between the ages of 7 and 11 a number of remarkable changes are taking place in the growth of the human organism. What we observe is so closely akin to the opening out of a plant in flower that the resemblance cannot be entirely fanciful. First there is the purely physical growth, then the petal expansion of the various emotions and the early filling out of the seedbox of intellect . . . but though we think of each of these in its turn, they are all part of a single, simultaneous development.

Analogy of this kind are, of course, no more than biological; and it was no accident that induced the early evolution-theorists to draw conclusions about human development based on just such comparisons. The Recapitulation Theory, for example, sought to prove that the free play activities of children were a shadowing-forth of the pursuits of primitive man, in the same way that the development of the human embryo repeated in telescoped version the story of evolution in all its stages. Of the latter phenomenon there can be no question: the truth of it can be demon-

strated by X-ray. Of the other, all that can be said is that it looks very much as though there might be something in it, but that the proof can never be more than theoretical. The issue is complicated by the fact that we believe that once the child is born it becomes a living soul, not just an animal. At this point the biological analogy—and the argument—breaks down. For this reason, and because many of its pretensions were only pseudo-scientific, the Recapitulation Theory is now discredited by most educationists. One cannot help feeling, all the same, that its rejection has in part been due to that same prejudice which causes many people to find the doctrine of evolution distasteful and to fight shy of it accordingly. If we examine the facts of behaviour dispassionately, we shall be forced to admit that the spontaneous impulses of juniors *do* correspond in a very remarkable way with the activities of early man. This constant urge to be on the move, to explore, to build, to acquire and to hoard, to make, to go with the gang, can have only one explanation. To affirm that "the modern instinct psychology, an offshoot of outmoded biological speculation has, in spite of a superficial attractiveness, little in reality to offer to the practical teacher"<sup>4</sup> is an unwarranted dogma. In reality it has a great deal to offer.

So long as the teacher thinks of his pupils as being inert, so long will his role remain for better or worse that of an instructor. So long as the children are kept passive, so long will the forces of initiative be held in check and injury done to the very nature of life. For what emerges most clearly from any study of their behaviour is the paramount need for active, nay strenuous, self-expression. Above all else, they need to do things by, for and among themselves; and experience shows that, given half a chance, they are more than capable. The trouble is that most of the time

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(4) A. Pinsent: *op. cit.*, 6.

we are nervous of letting them "have a go" for fear of their making mistakes, for fear that we are not helping them sufficiently, for fear of losing formal control.

If the business of the Junior School is ever to be inspired by right motives, it must trace its sources to those motives which are compelling. Everyone knows that the learner never works so well as when he is enthusiastically interested. The question is whether enthusiastic interest can be evoked by dangling incentives from without or whether it is not better prompted from within. Purpose is dynamic: forward-looking because impelled, so to speak, from behind. If we cannot agree about the precise nature of this dynamism, no matter. "Urge," "impulse," "hunger," "need," "drive," "instinct" . . . why be fussy about names? The point is that it is a *force* and that any curriculum not aligned with it cannot be fully energised. Whether we like it or not, the common impulses of young children (as the 1931 Report recognised), "have all the characteristics of an instinctive urge."

This admission, from which there is no escaping, cannot but have the most profound consequences in planning any junior curriculum; for, as we have written elsewhere, "the most distinctive feature of any instinctive act is that it is invariably performed with interest or excitement. Often this excitement is so pronounced as to be definable as emotion, passion; at other times it is more vaguely felt, not obviously coloured by sensation. It is never indifferent. Moreover, there is in activity of this kind a feeling of satisfaction which so flavours the action it accompanies as to render it peculiarly effortless. The interest felt is dynamic because it is the eager response of the whole organism, glad of its own self-awareness, exultant to feel that it is being used for its natural purpose."<sup>5</sup>

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(5) W. Kenneth Richmond: *Blueprint for a Common School*, 20.

This, then, is the secret of that all-round education which we have set ourselves to find, as well as the justification of any curriculum "thought of in terms of activity and experience." It explains also the junior's tireless vivacity. Work or play, the activity is all one to him, provided only that in answering a felt need it supplies an outlet for his irrepressible energies.

It will be noted that the tendencies which we have discerned in the 7 to 11 years' period are all self-determining. As the child's ego unfolds, this process of self-determination brings with it a steady growth of purpose. At the lowest level "worthwhileness" may be no more than a blind impulse, but once let it find its appropriate expression and the ensuing action becomes, as we say, purposeful. Indeed, what we call a sense of purpose is the feeling which arrives when the unconscious impulse breaks surface and enters the conscious sphere. What becomes of it afterwards will, of course, depend upon the kind of intelligence that is brought to bear on it. The same purpose in different minds will produce different results. For the moment all we need insist on is that the purpose must be self-found. It cannot be given.

If these arguments hold good, we can now begin to draw certain general conclusions about the kind of organization demanded of the Junior School. Having already admitted that there is a dual claim upon it and that attainment-levels in the tool-subjects are to be maintained, we are free to go ahead in the belief that the major content of the curriculum can best be decided by the natural interests of the children themselves. Also that this content shall not necessarily be conceived as "useful information," but rather as self-discovery. Everything points to activity as the key-note, with the teacher holding more of a remote control. But to be educational, the activity must always be purposeful and the degree of freedom will vary from time to time. In self-

chosen occupations the individual child may be made entirely responsible for his own devices and left to get on with them without further assistance. In group-work the decision may be made by common consent, with the teacher brought in as a consultant where necessary. In class-activities, where everyone is engaged in the same occupation, the teacher's control will be more evident, amounting at times to positive direction.

If the account of junior characteristics as given here is broadly correct then certain essentials of curriculum-planning may be said to assert themselves indisputably.

1. On physical grounds, the school organization must allow of a maximum of unrestricted movement. It is not enough that the children should be at liberty to move about at will, any more than it is enough to satisfy the hunger for an outdoor life merely by assuring them good ventilation. For all children, movement is a mode of intellectual development and a vehicle for meaning. Since the junior is typically a *kinæsthete* there must be provision for creative movement—dance—as distinct from physical training. With regard to the latter, and in games, it should be noted that sex differences cannot wholly be ignored, particularly so far as the 9 to 11 year-olds are concerned.
2. The school-organization must be graded according to the social and emotional changes taking place throughout the four years' course. The needs of the entry-class, for instance, will be quite different from those at the upper end of the school. The advance from infant shyness to the confident initiative and self-assurance of the near-adolescent is gradual and the activity-approach must be careful to keep time with it.
3. The school must cater for an uncommon variety of

interests and for an extreme range of abilities. For this purpose, the collective-class system is altogether unsuitable. As and when occasion demands, all juniors need experience in working individually and co-operatively, though this by no means implies that the formal "lesson" can be written off as totally unsuitable. There will always be times when children will all want to do the same thing at the same time; when they will listen for instructions on how to proceed with the work in hand. Quite apart from the necessity of learning elementary techniques, children need to experience the virtues of submission to authority and the performance of common tasks as well as those of independence in their freer activities. The school-organization must arrange for easy exchange between formal and informal periods, but in doing so it must ensure that there is an apparent orderliness in all things. Otherwise the changeover from collectivism to group-work or free activities is bound to be unsettling. Nothing is more likely to undermine the child's sense of security than the feeling of not knowing where he is. As an initial step, the practice of allocating fixed periods for "teacher's time" seems to be a wise one.

4. With this exception, and since the child's interests are so impulsive, a fluid time-table seems advisable. "The great thing is to strike the iron while it is hot and to seize the wave of the pupils' interest in each successive subject before its ebb has come"<sup>6</sup> said William James, mixing his metaphors to good effect; and it is hard to see how significant interests are to be discovered unless there is some arrangement by which the children can make them known. There is much to be said for let-

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(6) *Principles of Psychology*, II, 401.

ting one child's enthusiasm infect the rest and for the teacher's "dropping everything" when he sees wild-fire kindling. Juniors have more to gain from social contacts within the group than from any other agency. In addition, no child likes having to leave off a job when he is well and truly absorbed in it. On the other hand, being responsible for what he does with his "free" time it is important that he should learn to order his activities according to some balanced schedule. If the bell goes for "teacher's time," it must be observed!

We need not deceive ourselves by supposing that at the start juniors will take to this kind of system like ducks to water. After all, most of them have been so long conditioned in habits of silent acceptance, that they will hardly know what to make of it. Those who have been trained in the more enlightened type of Infant's School will be the first to settle in; but even then, comparatively few 7-year-olds know how to occupy themselves profitably for any length of time. They still look to teacher to supply their wants and like nothing better than being told what to do and how to do it. In order that the child may come to realize that more is expected of him than obedience, a gradual weaning process must take place. If it is to be successful there must be a complete freedom from fear. This in turn reinforces the argument for letting the child find its own rate of progress, for one of the chief bugbears of working to a fixed standard lies in the fact that the nervous child worries, the retarded is hopelessly handicapped, and the bored child is only kept up to scratch by the dread of penalties that may be incurred.

Teachers often protest that because of numbers and lack of space, such a system of organizing results in the abler pupils having to mark time and the backward ones getting out of their depth. On the contrary: "the good time-table should be so elastic that the quick child need not be held back for the slow, the "stayer" roused from his absorption and the worn out or bored by too long a period of work . . . All get their chance."<sup>7</sup>

Granted, such a system is difficult to work. It calls for harder work, greater understanding, forbearance, enthusiasm and for other qualities just as precious in the teacher, but it is not unworkable. In any case, we are not concerned with soft options.

5. While the teacher's duty is to become progressively self-effacing it is vital that he should constantly be in touch at all points. The fact that the children are all happily engaged in activities is not in itself a sufficient criterion of success. Occupation is not education. While he should refrain, as far as humanly possible, from imposing his own will on the work, the teacher must always be the judge, even where it has been done without his supervision. Unless they are guided by a clearly understood plan, activities can very soon degenerate into a haphazard frittering-away of time. Individuals and groups must always seek permission for starting on free-activities and be accountable for a definite aim in what they do; failing which, it is up to the teacher to supply one. (In which case, presumably, the activity ceases to be "free" and becomes either "directed" or "controlled.") There is all the difference in the world between children doing as they like and children liking what they do.

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(7) N. Catty: *Learning and Teaching in the Junior School*, 31.

6. In order that the children may follow the lead suggested by their private interests, abundant supplies of materials for creative work should be ready to hand.

The sense of touch being so refined, there is room for experiment in the plastic arts, clay-modelling, pottery, puppet-making, etc. Brushes and paints for art-work, cardboard and wood for craft, tools for practical production jobs with the older boys, sewing materials for the girls, are obvious necessities. "Give them the tools and they'll finish the job" should be the teacher's motto. If some want to model and some to draw and some to do woodwork and some to get on with their reading—fine! His job is to see to it that no one has any excuse for being kept idle.

7. Because the acquisitive impulse is so strong at this stage the child should be encouraged in the belief that all the tackle of his school trade—exercise books, drawings and little manufactures—are indisputably his personal possessions. Some place also should be found for collector's clubs of one sort or another. He should at all times have the feeling that the school, or at any rate the classroom, really and truly belongs to him and that within reasonable limits he is free to make what use of it he will. Even if it means turning him loose to decorate the walls, the risk is worth taking, if only for the enhancement of the school-atmosphere which results. In the same way, such rules of conduct as are thought necessary should be drawn up by the children themselves, or, where that is not possible, put to them in such a way as to be agreed upon between pupils and staff in partnership. If the Junior School is to be a going concern everyone, from the Head down to the 7-year-old straight from the Infants' department, must feel that he has an active share in the run-

ning of its affairs. Every means should be used to give the child vested interests in the school so that in playing his part with others he may learn what it is to "belong" and to serve in a democratic community.

8. Because of the urge to roam and the keen desire for actuality some attempt at organized study of the environment should be made. If it cannot be bargained for in school time then the idea of a voluntary Explorers' Club is worth bearing in mind. The scope of the exploration will vary enormously, from a moor-side to a bombed-site, but no matter what kind of neighbourhood provides the school's venue, some acquaintance with it will be necessary. In some areas it may be that "the major content of educative experience for the primary school lies within the neighbourhood, not within the school."<sup>8</sup> If every district came up to the ideal outlined in "The Culture of Cities" we might be prepared to believe that this was true of all cases: as it is, it seems wiser not to be too emphatic. But if we cannot go all the way in assigning over-riding importance to out-of-school activities we can at least admit them to be an essential item in any programme.

9. Because of the child's growing self-assertion, not to mention his love of ritual, drama and mime will have an important place in any scheme of activities. Play-making and play-acting, in which action suggests its own words extempore are an ideal way of promoting speech-articulation and inner poise. As in all other activities, the children must be in full charge of their own "company," choosing their producer, arranging the parts among themselves and running their own show.

This last phrase sums up in four words what it has taken a long-winded chapter to say. Does it sound so impracticable as all that? Where it has been tried out, as we shall see, the results speak for themselves. To those who remain unconvinced we can only say this: that the junior child is a bold adventurer and that any curriculum that is not equally bold and adventurous will fail to bring out the best in him.

## IV.

### THE CURRICULUM THAT WE HAVE.

From proposals we turn to destructive criticism. The purpose of this chapter will be to substantiate the claim, made earlier, that the curriculum as practised in most Junior Schools is one "which has been handed down from the past and which in many respects no longer corresponds to the children's present needs." From time to time it has been pointed out that "the aims, methods and content of teaching have never been adequately analysed by scientific methods or fundamentally changed,"<sup>1</sup> but no one seems to worry overmuch about the (implied) condemnation. Again and again we are told that the division of the time-table into subjects is an adult conception which finds no corresponding justification in the young learner's experience—but how many teachers believe this firmly enough to start again from fresh premises? No one doubts, for example, that the 8-year-old is very much concerned with the here-and-now of things, that his time-sense is to all intents and purposes non-existent, despite which we persist in teaching him History as chronology. We have heard all the objections to the collective-class system—that it is too verbal, that it relies too much on passivity, that it takes no account of individual interests and rates of progress—and yet, for many reasons best known to ourselves, we carry on . . . While recognizing that practical difficulties can be inhibitive, it must not be forgotten that a number of schools (and by no means always those with the blessed advantages of small classes and adequate floor-space) *have* contrived to reorientate themselves to the new approach. Why so few? Can it be that when all is said and done we believe that the old way, with

all its faults, had no great harm in it and that for better or worse we are wedded to it indefinitely?

*Autre temps autre moeurs.* The what-was-good-enough for-me mentality no longer meets the needs of the contemporary situation. We live in a changed and rapidly changing world. Just how untenable is the position of those who would retain the status quo in primary education may be seen by examining the course of events which has landed it in its present position. It may be as well then, if we delve back a little into the pre-history of the Junior School and remind ourselves of one or two dates and facts.

In 1876 the upper age-limit for compulsory school attendance was fixed at 10 plus for the first time. Until January 1st, 1894, when the Elementary Education (School Attendance) Act came into force, pupils might obtain total or partial exemption before they reached the age of 11. The leaving-age was not raised to 12 until 1899. *In other words, until less than fifty years ago, all state schools were, in effect, primary.*

Moreover, the elementary system was self-contained, governed by a harshly austere code, offering only a utility brand of education designed for the working classes. Almost to the end of the 19th century it was commonly held that instruction in the three R's was the sole business of the school and a sufficient end in itself. The affirmation of the Newcastle Commission Report (1861) "that it is quite possible to teach a child soundly all that is necessary for him in the shape of intellectual attainments *by the time that he is 10 years old*," while it did not go unchallenged, remained the guiding spirit of popular education throughout its most formative period. At no time was there the slightest intention in the minds of the ruling class to educate the masses out of that state into which it had pleased God to call them. Conditions of employment had made it necessary to remove

the handicap of illiteracy. The real aim, never announced, was to conscript and train an army of proficient workers.

Nowadays it is difficult to understand the niggardly and partial motives which went to the creation of the free-school system in this country, and all-too-easy to allow feelings of recrimination to get the better of one's judgment. How vile and uncharitable, for instance, Robert Lowe's retort to those who ventured to criticize Payment by Results now sounds : " I do not think it is any part of the duty of the Government to prescribe what people should learn, except in the case of the poor where time is so limited that we must fix upon a few elementary subjects . . . The lower classes ought to be educated to discharge the duties cast upon them. They should also be educated that they may appreciate and defer to a higher education when they meet it."

This is no place to inquire into the reasons for the State's reluctance to assume an onus which had so long been borne by voluntary effort: the point is that time *was* short and the Victorian child's school-life both cheap and nasty. From the start, because there was nothing else for it, the pupil was saddled with a curriculum of mental drills. By 1895, when the Payment by Results system was condemned, the education of juniors had been cast and set in an iron mould from which it has still not finally been delivered. Assumptions made as far back as 1861 tended to be accepted in perpetuo. Practices which had been forced upon it of economic and political necessity continued. The effects of the ban which had been placed on all but a few basic subjects remained long after it had been raised. Teachers who had been trained purely and simply as instructors were incapable of making much use of the little latitude conferred upon them at the turn of the century, or too nervous to try. The watchful eye of authority was always upon them, never happier than when it could report " that the change has so far

been justified by its results and that it appears to have given more freedom to the life of the schools without impairing their technical efficiency."<sup>2</sup> Always that same nervousness lest standards should fall if even the slightest measure of freedom were granted! Not that authority need have feared. Everywhere the curriculum was dyed in the wool with Reading, Writing and Arithmetic. To be sure, the less obviously utilitarian studies in History and Geography might now be included and after the 1902 Exhibition there was quite a craze for Nature Study; but generally speaking, the new additions were no better than oral lessons or "Reading" under another name. To these might be added Physical Training ("Drill," of unhappy memory) and Art (Linear Drawing, mostly, done by rule of thumb). With such extra bits and pieces the time-table might be said to be gradually filling out, but the process was one of haphazard accretion, not a natural growth.

Numbers alone ensured the maintenance of this state of affairs. In the early years of this century a rapidly increasing school-population, together with shortage of teachers, forced up the size of classes to 70, 80 and over. In 1909 came a *cause célèbre* in which the L.C.C. was fined £10,000 for having nearly 2,000 classes with more than 40 pupils on their registers. No doubt, as they say, it was a gesture. But then came the 1914-18 War and after that the Geddes Axe. The regulation, according to which junior classes were not to exceed 40, was dead-lettered. In the '20's there was a temporary improvement under the first Labour Government followed by the financial scare of 1931, followed by the calls of rearmament, followed by 1939 and all that . . .

The upshot was that because of wretched working conditions, and from sheer force of habit, the Junior School became confirmed in an outlook which had been "cast upon

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(2) G. A. N. Lowndes: *The Silent, Social Revolution*.

it" in the days of duress. Both educationally and economically, everything it stood for was poverty-stricken.

Other factors conspired to hold it to the purpose which had been foisted upon it in its origins. Chief among these has been the extension of free secondary-schooling which, unintentionally or otherwise, has had the effect of imposing requirements upon the Junior School which have proved almost as onerous, if less stringent, than those of Payment by Results. Free places were awarded solely on performance in written English and Arithmetic. Enough said! The 1907 Regulations for Secondary Schools stipulated that a proportion of Grammar School places (25% of the total admission), should be reserved for pupils from the elementary schools. In itself this was an excellent move in that it forged the first real link between two systems which had previously existed in worlds apart, but in the event it turned out to be a mixed blessing for the great majority of junior children. Too often it meant that the sole aim and justification of the all-age elementary school's work became the winning of scholarships. The false incentive of Payment by Results (the necessity of the teacher's earning a yearly financial grant), had been replaced by another no less insidious, which fostered motives of material ambition in the individual learner. From 7 to 11, if not from the moment he first entered the infant's class, the child was kept grinding away at the examination subjects as if his life depended on nothing else. Everything was sacrificed to further the chances of the 5—6% minority who were mentally slick enough to make the grade and be picked as winners in the examination year. With competition so fierce, attainment standards soon began to show signs of inflation; and as the "Matriculation" fetish became the rage so the upward spiral grew more vicious and the requirements of the secondary schools correspondingly the more severe. The

junior department (for as yet the Junior School had not achieved any independent existence), was fast becoming "an artificial prison whose inmates could only escape in one direction, across the drawbridge of an examination into a particular type of secondary education—a type not originally designed for their reception."<sup>3</sup>

By far the most unfortunate feature of the free-place competition was the fact that it was well nigh universally approved by teachers and parents alike. Elementary teachers liked it because it provided them with an objective, something on which they could base their achievement and a reputation of sorts. Enamoured of a cunning device which lured them on in the hope of getting something for nothing, most parents favoured a system which forced their children to work hard. It should be remembered also that a generation reared in the hard school of Payment by Results did not take kindly to the idea of a more liberal education. The parent of modest means could see no use in experimental methods and the introduction of "non-essentials" which, to his way of thinking, were so many frills and fal-lals. How bitter his hostility could be, and how bigoted, may be judged by this indignant contribution to the press :

"Sir,

We were informed that our poor children were to be taught reading, writing and arithmetic only. Now this schoolmaster teaches them the contents of their own insides and thus adds to the rudeness that is innate in the lower order. If the Author of the Universe had meant us to know what our livers are like, He would not have hidden them away in security."<sup>4</sup>

Laughable? A Victorian museum-piece? Maybe it is, but none the less typical of the kind of resistance which more

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(3) Lord Eustace Percy: *Year Book of Education* (1932).

(4) Quoted by G. A. N. Lowndes: *op. cit.* 24.

enlightened councils were, and to some extent still are, up against.

But there is no need to resort to exaggeration in order to make the picture seem gloomier than it was. Even before 1914, in various little ways, progressive methods had begun to infiltrate into the elementary schools. School journeys, occasional visits to art-galleries, museums, parks and places of interest brought a breath of fresh air into an educational atmosphere that was more than slightly fusty: and slowly, but surely, the kindlier influence of the Nursery and Infants' was beginning to make itself felt.

The next step of any consequence came with the publication of the 1926 Report on the Education of the Adolescent. At long last the time had arrived when the union of the elementary and grammar school systems could be envisaged; and the terms of reference of the Hadow Committee were to investigate the means of granting appropriate educational facilities for all children of post-primary age. To this end, the decision to make a clean break at 11 plus was taken. The country-wide organization which followed did something to break down the class-distinction barriers which had previously kept the elementary and secondary schools in separate compartments. The recognition that there might be types of secondary schools other than the academic and not necessarily inferior, represented a considerable advance in the nation's educational thinking and policy.

Nevertheless, looking back, it appears that the decision to go ahead with the programme of building and equipping the senior schools could only have been taken by regarding the cause of the newly born Junior Schools as of secondary importance. When, five years later, the Report on the Primary School appeared, it was more than belated. Being so ill-timed, its recommendation seemed merely utopian; wishful afterthoughts. What had happened in the mean-

time, in most areas where the work of reorganization had been pressed forward, was that the senior children had been transferred to new premises and the juniors had been left to make what use they could of the old. In every sense of the word, they were the left-overs. Many Infant's departments had long been housed separately, and now that special provision was being made for the 11 pluses, the effect was to leave the Junior School as nothing more nor less than a truncated elementary school. To make matters worse, many of the better qualified teachers opted for appointments in the Senior Schools: there was a certain kudos to be gained in the transfer—and better prospects of promotion. "Uncertifs" and "supplementaries" were good enough to fill any posts vacated in the Junior Schools.

Perhaps this is putting it a little strongly? Yet when every allowance has been made for the administrative tangle caused by the Great Reorganization, the impression remains that, in its inception, the Junior School received a raw deal, or at any rate a thin slice of the cake. And a pretty stale one at that.

Take it or leave it, we must date the birth of the idea of a new Junior School from 1931. We may take it as a melancholy comment on the educational philosophy of the time that there should have been this seeming indifference to the cause of putting first things first. In all fairness, however, it has to be conceded that the order of priorities decided upon was more or less inevitable. Since any long-term policy involved the complete overhaul of a complicated and inadequate system of secondary education, it was only to be expected that the focus of attention should be that way inclined; and maybe it is too much to expect of the most efficient administrative machine that it should do more than one thing at a time. When every cause has been examined and every allowance made, however, the fact remains that

the claims of the Junior children were pushed to one side, if they were not actually left out of the picture altogether. Unluckily, they had no great name to champion their cause, no patron of the calibre, say, of a Margaret MacMillan.

No wonder, then, if to those whose job it was to implement it, the Report seemed cold comfort, full of high-sounding hopes and wordy exhortation of the easier-said-than-done variety. Still, there it was: they carried on, resigned to the thought that *plus ça change plus c'est la même chose*.

As it proved, they had every excuse for not attempting much in the way of reform. In the first place, the substitution of "special places" for "free places," though it caused no end of controversy, brought no appreciable relaxation of the "scholarship" examination pressure. In some ways the use of intelligence tests, first introduced as a check on the results in written English and Arithmetic, only served to set the seal on that view of education which places its highest premium on "brains." Since Galton first devised his scales of assessment there has been a continuous series of batteries of bigger and better tests. Before long the Junior School became the happy hunting ground for testers of all kinds, but for no one else. Maybe between the Wars there was some slight easing-off of standards, but by far the greater part of the teacher's energies were still devoted to the maintenance of attainment levels in Arithmetic and written English, particularly in the final year. Here and there a school might boast that the children "took the examination in their stride," without special coaching—presumably because they had been put through their paces to good effect earlier on or because they were exceptionally bright. Elsewhere there was no concealment of the fact that the "scholarship class" was pushed, and pushed hard, in order that the school's reputation for efficiency should not be impaired.

What chances were there of the work's being infused with originality or verve under such conditions? The supply of young teachers trained in progressive methods was totally inadequate—and how many were those who left college full of good intentions and the right ideas only to have their idealism stifled in the oppressive atmosphere of the schools. In any case, since everyone's eyes were on the seniors, what was more natural than that students should regard appointment to the Junior School as a decidedly second-best proposition? To say that the Junior School lacked allure is to put it mildly.

Oddly enough, it was left to World War II to create the opportunity which peace and planning alike had denied. The opinion that "the prospect of any development of Primary Schools became more and more remote and by 1940 educational progress came practically to a standstill," is wholly wide of the mark. Evacuation, and all the make-shift arrangements that went with it, taken in conjunction with the all-round relaxation of controls and falling-off in attainments which ensued, gave the Junior School just the breathing space that it required. Many a teacher who had never had to cope with anything more difficult than a ready-made syllabus had to improvise on-the-spot schemes, very often without the aid of books or chalk or even pen-and-ink. Many a teacher who had never known any atmosphere more bracing than that of the classroom had perforce to obey Froebel's injunction and go out into the highways and byways "with, and at one with, his children, striving together."

Judged by pre-war reckonings, the work undoubtedly suffered; but the loss in verbalism was more than compensated by the gain in realism. With the Authorities everywhere too preoccupied to be fussy, the Junior School was left to follow its own devices—which was probably the kindest

fate that could have befallen it at this critical juncture. Almost for the first time it was free to experiment—or should we say, rather, that because so much had to be improvised, experiment was thrust upon it? Whichever it was, the activity-approach made more headway during these six years than it had previously done in half a century.

And so into the Phoney Peace, with its promises of reconstruction. In the course of all the disputes and deliberations that preceded the Education Act, very little was said about the Junior School. Outside the House, apart from a few devotees, it received only casual mention : inside it, none to speak of. From the speeches that were made and the articles that appeared in the educational press, it might have been thought that the only problem which arose in connection with the Junior School was that of classifying the children at 11 plus. The idea that the primary stage was important in its own right was admitted in theory but the possibility of its being of primary importance was never seriously entertained. On the contrary, the most prevalent assumption seemed to be that the significance of the "continuous process" increased in proportion (? geometrical?) to the ages of the pupils concerned.

Even so, the Act did something to recognise the place and claim of primary education, if only indirectly and by inference. At least it wrote into the statute book some of the conditions essential for its future development. The assurance that school buildings would be (ultimately) "sufficient in number, character and equipment," the limitation of classes to 40 pupils (on paper), and the suggestion (understood) that the special-place examination would be done away with, augured goodwill if nothing better.

Which brings us to the present day. It is idle to pretend that the interval which has elapsed since the passing of the Act has seen the fulfilment of the fine promises which, at the

time, seemed almost within reach of achievement. In 1944, though no one supposed that an educational Golden Age could be brought about by a wave of the legislative wand, everyone was eager for fresh endeavour and tolerably confident in the future. A difficult future, perhaps, but one with prospects that were worth the awaiting. Few foresaw the disappointments and deferments that were to come, the relapse into apathy, the indifference that follows a receding vision.

If only the Junior School might rediscover some of the zeal and resoluteness that held it to its purpose during the war years! The hazy day-dreams conjured up by the 1931 Report were not after all, entirely miragesque; but if they are not to prove delusive it is high time that we wakened up to the fact that opportunities of realizing them are ready to hand if only we will seize them. We cannot rest content to say merely that much remains to be done. *Everything* remains to be done. Time and again, as the historical review shows, the Junior School has got off to a false start. If it is not to be left standing, a more progressive way-of-life must be found for it. And seeing that, officially or otherwise, it serves as the nation's common school, who dare say that there is any more urgent task in the whole field of post-war education?

## V.

### TO DATE—BUT NOT YET UP TO DATE.

We have argued that any idea of the Junior School's being necessarily committed to a curriculum of mental drills is false; that the antecedents which went to its formulation are no more relevant to the present situation than are the penny-farthing bicycle or the Victorian antimacassar. In other words, the assumption that the three R's are the essential core of this curriculum, to which everything else is, as it were, extra and subsidiary is one of those ideas which we have come to believe in but which do not bear serious scrutiny.

If we are right, then the leeway that has to be made up is tremendous. We may think that a new direction in the work is urgently needed, but are we justified in asserting that opportunities for an all-along-the-line advance exist? Are teachers in any position to start from different premises?

Many would deny it, giving as their reasons :

1. that lack of suitable buildings renders it impracticable to break away from formal class-teaching;
2. that the "Scholarship" examination looks like remaining as strongly entrenched as ever it was;
3. that activity methods are not effective with large classes;
4. that the rightness of such methods remains to be proved.

Just how valid are these objections? Are they good, honest reasons or only excuses for go-slow policies that endear themselves to ca-canny mentalities? For what they are worth, let us examine them in turn.

1. Of all the disabilities under which the Junior School labours, the first and greatest is unquestionably lack of SPACE. The fact that the old curriculum has persisted

so stubbornly is attributable to this, rather than to any other reason. If children are to move about freely and engage in a variety of occupations then it is obvious that any idea of the classroom as the architectural unit of the school falls to the ground. It becomes as absurd and cumbrous as the iron-bound furniture itself. The present "area per child" basis of calculation likewise becomes inadequate and will need to be drastically revised if it is not to prove a straight-jacket. The latest regulations suggest 520 square feet as a minimum floor-space for 40 children. To what extent such an allowance would be adequate for the purposes we have in mind is more than doubtful. It is conceivable that given the most up-to-date premises, an activity-type school might still find itself tied down so long as each classroom needed to be permanently occupied. What is required, more than anything else, is not so much extra room as *extra rooms*.

Since comparatively few Junior School buildings satisfy the barest standard requirements—and since the building programme looks like being held up for years to come—it may seem suicidal to advocate any change-over to the topsyturvydom of activities. While everything remains to be done to secure suitable working conditions, however, much can be done in the existing set-up. Where there is a will there is a way. Very often a little ingenuity can convert a queer, rambling old building to a new use. Of outstanding examples of activity-schools that occur to mind the first is one that is housed on the top floor of a "barracks" block in the worst of slum districts. Another contrives to carry on in a converted rectory, using a church-hall across the way for assembly. Perhaps also it will be as well if we remind ourselves that sheer lack of accommodation first

caused the Gary Schools (Indiana), to stumble upon acitivity—though in their case it has to be admitted that opportunities for environmental work were better than those that can normally be expected in this country.

The answer to the first objection, then, would seem to be that it is far from being insuperable. Not such a dusty answer, either. Difficulties exist in order to be overcome. If there is to be movement and making going on in one and the same classroom, it is obvious that life cannot be altogether comfortable for teacher or children. Activities are apt to be untidy, not to say messy, affairs. It would be a great help, for instance, if there were suitable washing facilities for clay-modellers, lockers and benches for wood-workers, changing rooms for dancing and drama. The fact that we have not got them is a nuisance, but not such a deterrent that it need prevent our engaging in these activities if we really *want* them. True, it may be downright impossible to bargain for the full range of activities—we may have to introduce them in a restricted form—but even the pokiest of schools has its odd corners that are good for something. “Modern dance,” taken in a bicycle shed or an art room in a disused boiler-house may fall a long way short of the ideal, but at least they evidence the right spirit. And if the worst comes to the worst, there is always the playground.

2. As to the “Scholarship” bugbear it is better ignored. Sooner or later it must die of inanition. With the provision of “free” secondary education for all and the achievement of “parity of status” for the Modern *vis à vis* the Grammar Schools, the evils of a competitive examination must eventually be mitigated. In 1944 it was commonly supposed that the examination

would soon be replaced by more up to date methods of selection and classification; but though the problem has been submitted to careful research the results so far have not been impressive. Certainly they have not been conclusive.<sup>1</sup> If anything, official opinion seems to be hardening again in favour of the good old-fashioned method of attainment testing. Thus the Chief Examiner's Report for 1945-46 asserted that: "suitable children will handle abstract symbols or hold broad general ideas in mind . . . They will have a mastery of preliminary academic (*sic*) drills," an assertion which is borne out by the prospectus for the Written English examination which includes such grammatical items as formation of plurals, gender modification, change of tense, simple homonyms and so on. Admittedly these requirements look more formidable on paper than they actually are; there need be no fear that for "suitable children" they are pitched too high. What rankles is not so much the idea of artificially imposed standards,

(1) Perhaps the "quotas" system of allocation worked out by the Walsall L.E.A. most nearly approximates to the ideal solution. For a detailed account of this, see the article by V. J. Moore in "A Symposium on the Selection of Pupils for Different Types of Secondary Schools" (British Journal of Educational Psychology, Vol. XVIII, Part 1, February, 1948), from which the following Summary is taken:

1. The scheme described was based on a plan suggested by Professor Valentine to avoid the evils due to pupils from different primary schools competing in an external examination, and to enable school records to be used without the extreme difficulty of assessing the recommendations of one head teacher as against those of others.
2. All candidates are submitted (after universal coaching) to two intelligence tests. On the basis of these, grammar school place awards are made to each primary school according to the number of its pupils who attain the minimum I.Q. needed to fill the vacant places in the selective secondary schools.
3. The places allotted to each primary school are then awarded to those of its pupils who score best on the three following: (a) Intelligence tests; (b) school report; (c) school internal examination; (a) being weighted against (b) and (c) in the ratio 3 : 2.
- (4) In very few cases does the pupil who wins a grammar school place for his primary school by his score in the Intelligence Test fail to gain entrance to a grammar school. This is borne out by the high correlations between (a) intelligence test orders, and (b) final orders based on tests, school reports and internal examinations. These correlations average 0.98.

The scheme has received practically unanimous support from the heads of all schools concerned, primary and secondary.

as the thought of what is behind the insistence on any form of examination at all. So long as it remains, so long will the first emphasis tend to be on instructional method. So long, too, will the besetting-sin of the Junior School, that of seeking to separate the sheep from the goats, persist. In any case, the idea that any child's educational future can be decided at 10 or 11 years old by even the most exhaustive and searching test is one that should be fought to the last ditch.

Unfortunately there are still too many who believe that the activity approach is tantamount to a "flight from scholarship" and that therefore a measure of reaction may be no bad thing. They claim the benefit of the argument that since the stress of the competitive examination is nothing like so pronounced as it used to be, its retention can result in no great harm. It is true that diagnostic testing, taken in conjunction with the mass of evidence supplied in record cards, head-teacher's assessments and interviews, has gone a long way to assure that selection and classification are tolerably reliable without the child's being forced to undergo an intensive course of *ad hoc* studies. What is tested now is the child's innate abilities and aptitudes rather than the quality of the teaching that he happens to have received. One consequence of this is that sensible Heads are no longer quite so disposed to regard the number of successful candidates as the sole index of the school's efficiency. Official opinion, too, begins to adopt criteria of another kind: it no longer points to the school which has gained a reputation for "winning scholarships" as being necessarily the most commendable.

But perhaps the most important factor of all is the way that parents feel about the examination. Snob-

values are still prevalent, of course, and the pride of seeing Johnny come top of the list will always remain; but on the whole it is fair to say that nowadays most parents are nothing like so anxious to see that their children shall secure the benefits of a Grammar School education as they were formerly.<sup>2</sup> The need has largely disappeared. It needs no prophecy to foresee that measures of social security and the gradual levelling-out of status will sooner or later put paid to the old idea that a good education was one that qualified the pupil for a safe job. Already, now that the black-faced hewer of coal is held in greater estimation than the black-coated clerk, a more level-headed attitude among parents begins to be discernible.

In so far as its purpose is to select "suitable children" for the Grammar Schools, the examination itself is no better than a relic. When it can be replaced by more accurate devices, the case for its retention will disappear. Till then, the Junior School need not regard it as being more than a side-issue.

3. The point about out-size classes is more serious. It was laid down in the Act that the maximum should be 30 for secondary and 40 for primary schools. (The Scottish Report had no hesitation in recommending 30). Without pausing to question the logic—or the justice—of such a discrimination, we now have to face a situation which compels many L.E.A.'s (particularly in the

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(2) I am assured by many teachers that this is not merely an overstatement but that the truth is the very reverse. To some extent the sentence as it stands is an opinion based on personal impression and is therefore open to correction; but without waiting for a Gallup-poll verdict on the question, it is surely true that, by and large, class-consciousness plays a less predominant part nowadays in parents' choice of schools. Against this, it has to be admitted that the Private Schools are probably fuller than ever they were. But the existence of numbers of misguided *nouveaux riches* cannot be taken as invalidating the belief that the intelligent parent is in the ascendant. If this is a false hope, so much the worse for our education.

larger towns), to plan on a 48 per class basis. In places the numbers are still higher. Shortage of teachers, lack of accommodation and the recent rise in the birth rate have combined to bring about this sorry state of affairs. Today the annual intake of the Infants' Schools is anything up to 50 per cent. greater than it was in 1937 and there is no saying when this "inflationary pressure" is likely to ease. The chances are that unless the most determined efforts are made to cope with this situation, schools will be desperately overcrowded for some considerable time, probably ten or fifteen years at a conservative estimate.

Now this is serious, the more so since there is no getting away from the fact that large numbers are a main hindrance to the initiation of group and individual-activities. It is a sad commentary on the times that with all our administrative machinery in education we are apparently no nearer to a reduction in the size of classes than we were in 1909. No doubt so long as the nation sees fit to spend more on football pools and tobacco than it budgets for its schools, this state of affairs is likely to continue. The worst of it is that the longer the slur of congestion is upon us, the easier it becomes to regard it as a necessary evil, part of the scheme of things. In a mental climate of this kind the die-hard view is likely to carry the day.

It is often said that with 50 and more to take charge of, no teacher can usefully attempt anything more ambitious than the plain instruction. This is not altogether true, and the reasons for the denial are much the same as those which we have given in considering the first objection. Yet the argument is one that must command both sympathy and respect, for the complexities of an activity regime are so great as to seem quite in-

supportable when numbers are so unmanageable, particularly in the early stages when the changeover from collectivism to group organization is being effected. Once the pupils have learned how to order their own affairs and to do things off their own bat, however, the argument that numbers alone make activity-methods impossible ceases to hold good. Anyone who has visited a school where formal controls have given way to this sort of discipline will agree how delightful it is to see children responding to the trust that has been placed in them. If a staff-meeting has to be called at a moment's notice it can be done without bedlam resulting. Can the same be said of the conventional-type school?

4. If the Junior School teacher has not yet made up his mind about the necessity for a different approach to his work, at least he is free to do so without having pre-conceived notions about it. In this respect the advantage which he holds over his opposite-number of twenty years ago is incalculable. From the point of view of facilities and amenities he may not be much better off, possibly; but, then, what the Junior School is most in need of is not lavish equipment so much as scope for development; and for this the first pre-requisite is freedom from restraint. It is a matter for congratulation that no teacher with ideas nowadays need be held back by the need for conformity nor feel himself so accountable to a mistrustful officialdom as he was formerly.

To take only one minor instance—the arrangements for out-of-school visits during school time. In the old days formal application had to be made well in advance and the whole business was so tightly controlled that right of egress tended to be reserved for special occasions, if it was claimed at all. Under some authorities

this "7 days notice" regulation still obtains,<sup>3</sup> but in most areas it is waived. For good reasons, the Ministry must reserve the right of being informed as to when schools are not to be found at the usual address; but it is well understood in high places that the children's proper business cannot always be conducted within four walls, and the right is not insisted on to the letter. If this or that classroom is not occupied on the occasion of a chance visit from His Majesty's Inspector, there need be no fear of raised eyebrows nor of adverse reports.

Materially speaking too, the Junior School teacher is sitting prettier than ever. The introduction of a flat rate of remuneration for both primary and secondary stages irrespective of grade or type of school has done more than appease a long-felt grudge; it has removed some of that sense of inferiority which once attached to any sort of work with the lower age-groups. It is true that, for some obscure reason, the teacher in the Junior School may be required to put up with slightly shorter vacations than those enjoyed by his colleagues in senior departments, and that posts of special responsibility are not as numerous as they might be; but these are minor aggravations. Time was when the plums of the profession were thought to be in the Grammar Schools, failing which specialization with seniors was considered the next best proposition. Nothing is more likely to promote the cause of primary education than this frank and tangible recognition of its equal status.

No privilege without responsibility, however. When conditions of employment are improved it is surely not unfair to expect a new impetus in the work. Though it needs discreetness in the saying, everything points to

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(3) It would be unkind to stigmatize such Authorities as "backward," but it is difficult to appreciate their motives in retaining a hold on the schools which the central administration has seen fit to relinquish.

the conclusion that the onus of finding ways and means of implementing the recommendations of the 1931 Report is now more than ever upon the teacher.

Comparisons are odious, and any attempt to set off the old guard against the new would be an intolerable affront. No one pretends that the lines on which the Junior School has been run-in are better than tram-lines : the question is whether they have grown so well-worn and familiar that some people cannot do without them. If hard-earned experience cannot lightly be set aside, neither should experience that comes of slavish adherence to an outworn creed be allowed to stand in the way. Now that most of the two-year and emergency training colleges offer thoroughgoing courses in junior methods, we may look for an infusion of new blood and a more vigorous tempo in the trek towards progress. All honour to the few who in the past refused to stick to the rails and sought horizons of their own : their efforts are not forgotten. But it is for the new recruits to develop and extend a practice that the pioneer schools have been fumbling after over a period of years. It cannot be emphasised too strongly that the activity-approach stems not from a bookish theory, but from experience that is every bit as well tried as the humdrum practice that too often passes for efficiency. The latter has its affinities in Payments by Results and an era of old unhappy things. The "new" curriculum is not really so new-fangled : it goes back to Froebel and Pestalozzi and to that extent may be said to stem from a finer tradition.

At present the division among the ranks is only too clear. As often happens when there is a conflict of opinion, extremists on both sides have obscured the issue by announcing extravagant claims. Sometimes

the "free-activity" enthusiasts have created the impression that attainments of any sort can go to the devil for all they care, that anarchy is to be preferred to a conservative order. The upshot, as Dr. James has pointed out, is that "the word academic has become almost a term of abuse; 'intelligence' and 'bookish' are words of disparagement; 'activity' is always contrasted with 'mere verbalism'; Reading, and, presumably, thinking being no longer considered as activities."<sup>4</sup> The same writer goes on to remark that the "relationship to life" of this much vaunted new learning may, in the last analysis, be no more effective than that which is established through the less obvious paths of so-called remote studies.

This shot from the academic camp was as timely as it was well aimed; but while acknowledging a hit, we need not consider that it damages the structure of our argument in so far as it relates to primary education. We have already confessed to doubts about the wholesale application of activity methods in the Secondary School: and we have admitted that even in the case of the Junior School the sane curriculum must be in the nature of a compromise. The fact that the term "activity and experience" has occasioned an awful lot of loose-thinking (and diffuse writing!) is no warrant for questioning the essential validity of its meaning. That its place in the Grammar Schools is not obvious need occasion neither surprise nor regret. Provided that we are satisfied that the activity-approach is peculiarly fitted to the child's make-up during the 7 to 11 plus period, it is really no part of our business to inquire how far it may or may not be suited to adolescence.

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<sup>4</sup>) Article in the *Times Educational Supplement*, 1st February, 1947.

This much can be said, however, that the division between Science and the Humanities—that dichotomy which has become the hall-mark of Western culture—cannot well be resolved, nor a synthesis of studies arrived at unless there is some synthesis already existing in the learner's mind. Therefore it seems the more important that primary education should insist on what Froebel called “the ever-living unity that is in all things,” not seeking a ribbon-development in the brain but always aiming at an all-round training. Incoherent as it is in many ways, the junior's response to life is more integral than our own: and it is for us to take it as we find it, not as we would seek to make it.

At bottom, the real cleavage of opinion between teachers today is between those who pin their faith in the young learner's capacity for self-education and those who do not. If the latter are scornful of what they regard as a passing fashion, a New Outlook in education, they should remember that the ideas behind it are not, after all, so novel as they are sometimes made out to be. What price this passage from a forgotten Victorian?—“The great thing with knowledge and the young is to secure that it shall be their own, that it be not merely external to their inner and real self but shall go in *succum et sanguinem*; and therefore it is that the self-teaching that a baby and a child give themselves remains with them forever—it is of their essence, whereas what is given them *ab extra*, especially if it be received mechanically without relish and without any energizing of their nature, remains pitifully useless. The quantity of accurate observation, of reasoning from the known to the unknown, of inferring, the common and the rare, the odd and the even, the skill of the rough and the smooth, of form, of texture,

of weight—the amount of this sort of objective knowledge which every child of eight years has acquired, and acquired for life, is marvellous beyond any of our mightiest marches of intellect . . . Could we only get the knowledge of the school to go as sweetly and deeply and clearly into the vitals of the mind as this self-teaching has done, we should make the young mind grow as well as learn and be in understanding a man as well as in simplicity a child.”<sup>5</sup>

The vitals of the mind. We need no appeal to modern psychology to tell us what they are, only a reinterpretation of the truth contained in the Prophet’s saying that “a little child shall lead them.”

## VI.

### MODES AND CATEGORIES OF ACTIVITY.

To begin with, what does the word mean? The dictionary defines it as "exertion of energy," but if the term is to pass as educational currency we cannot leave it at that. The galley-slave who toils at an oar is exerting energy and so is the man who climbs Everest. How great is the difference between the activity which is enforced and that which is voluntarily inspired! Between the two is an infinite range, varying from complete freedom of choice to none at all. Within that range are any number of forms of activity which, however necessary they may be, are so utterly commonplace they can scarcely be accounted "educational"—*i.e.*, they add nothing to the doer's development. Washing one's face, dressing oneself or walking to school are activities of a sort, so familiar that to all intents and purposes they are effortless and might almost be described as automatic—and yet, although we think nothing of them simply because they *are* familiar, it is only fair to remember that the first time we did any of these things the performance was instinct with purpose and the accompanying experience a necessary part of our growing-up process. In a word the doing was a part of the becoming. It is in this sense of creative doing that the word "activity" is intended here. Where the "exertion of energy" is self-willed, self-impelled and self-directed the accompanying effort cannot but be significant.

If the activity-principle is justified in regarding the young learner more in the light of an agent and less and less as a recipient, then there is implied in it a reversal of practice and policy in teaching so complete, that it is necessary for us to know in advance how deeply we are committed by it. An ideology can become as fanatical in education as in politics. Where exactly is the present one likely to lead?

It is easy enough to indict the ex-elementary system as "a monument to the increasing predominance of collectivism." It is not so easy to discover, and transfer to, a working alternative. Future historians will certainly not find it fortuitous that at a time when personal rights were being threatened as never before, educational thought should have sought its supreme end in individualism. Unfortunately, the balance is not to be redressed by a straight swing of the pendulum. The choice is not a straight one between self-hood and its abnegation to Society or State. That best and wisest advocate of the cause of individualism, the late Sir Percy Nunn, was the first to admit that "individuality develops only in a social atmosphere where it can feed on common interests and common activities."<sup>1</sup> and indeed if there was a flaw in the Rousseauist doctrine, it lay in the failure to recognise just this truth. However clearly we discern the dangers inherent in collectivism, we must at the same time see that a democratic community relies upon the interdependence of its members as implicitly as it respects their individual independence. There is a code for the citizen which is public and has to be obeyed irrespective of personal likes and dislikes. There is likewise a code for the personality which is private and must remain inviolate. Man the citizen and Man the person are one, but they are not one and the same. In education, as in life, the difficulty is to know where to draw the line between the things that are Cæsar's and the things that are God's. Collectivism and individualism are neither good nor bad in themselves : they are two worlds and it is for the school to make the best of them.

Dissatisfaction with the class-teaching methods which have been bequeathed to us from the elementary system goes deeper than mere distaste for regimentation and mass-

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(1) *Education: its data and first principles*, 9.

production. There is more to it than the belief that it is impossible to teach 50 children the same things in the same way at the same rate; there is also the conviction that there must be something radically wrong with any social grouping in which the main cohesive forces are those of intimidation and restraint. Under such a regime the relationship between teacher and pupil tends inevitably to be one of "I'm telling you and I know best. Do as I say or else . . ." The perfect pupils are as likely as not the docile and the most inhibited—the ones who keep their mouths shut and do only what they are told.

Quite apart from other considerations, however, a school-discipline which relies so entirely on external controls cannot be said to be in accord with the contemporary mood. For this reason numerous attempts have been made from time to time to break away from a standardised teaching method.

First, the Dalton Plan. It purported to release the pupil from a rigid time-table and to allow scope for concentrated study as and when he felt inclined. It placed the responsibility of learning fairly and squarely upon him. The work was parcelled out in "assignments" and within prescribed limits he was free to get through it in his own way and in his own time, moving about at will, co-operating with others more or less as the fancy took him. The Plan was a step in the right direction, yet we hear very little of it nowadays; it seems to have died a natural death. Why? Possibly because it was so complicated and the results hardly repaid the extra trouble involved. Or—and this is more probable—because Daltonism really did no more than give a new twist to the old curriculum. Always implicit in it was the assumption that knowledge mattered most. Such freedom of choice as it allowed was illusory rather than real. In one way or another each "assignment" was an imposition.

Next the Winnetka Plan. This went a stage further, granting greater freedom and making allowance for likes and dislikes in the so-called "creative subjects"—music, art, dance and drama. These latter were considered as non-examinational, to be enjoyed for their own sakes. Other subjects were taken in the form of topics, each carefully arranged in a step-by-step programme so that self-instruction was possible at all stages. As under Daltonism, the details of this piecework system were left to the teacher; but at least the Winnetka-type organization had the inestimable advantage of leaving half the day free for creative and social activities.

Both Plans had this much in common, that they broke down the collective-class system and afforded ample opportunity for individual and group work. If they were only partially successful it was because they still conceived the curriculum as "knowledge to be gained and facts to be stored"—more particularly because they did not start from the pupils' spontaneous interests. Though exercising less immediate control, the teacher was still the one who decided what should be learned. The more conscientious he was, the more cut-and-dried it all became.

"He has to take the programme of work, which consists of a list of general topics and has to analyse each one of these generalities into a list of steps to be covered or tasks to be performed by each of his pupils. Each stage has to be quite clear-cut so that whenever a pupil has finished one piece of work it may be possible, at a moment's notice, to provide him with the task which follows logically upon the one just accomplished."<sup>2</sup> The *reductio ad absurdum* of this, one imagines, might result in the teacher's becoming a chromium-plated penny-in-the-slot machine, doling out parcels of work-to-be-done, each numbered and labelled,

(2) cf. G. M. Fleming: *Individual Work in Primary Schools*, 24-25.

complete with instructions. But it is easy to mock, and no scheme looks very convincing on paper. In its American setting, where the free-and-easy life and high-pressure mental slickness somehow go together, there is little doubt that the Winnetka Plan enjoyed a genuine success. In this country it never caught on to any extent.

The same cannot be said of the Project, yet another tentative step in the direction of a "curriculum thought of in terms of activity and experience." The Project took its stand by the belief that the desire to learn must spring from a genuine motive and that the most effective medium for it was action. In a word, it recognised that the desire for knowledge could best be promoted through the pupil's felt needs. Accordingly it began by putting him in the position to choose what he wanted to do and proceeded from that point. It aimed at "wholehearted, purposeful activity proceeding in a social environment."<sup>3</sup> Ideally, the Project was intended to be "a problematical act carried to its completion in its natural setting."<sup>4</sup>

In practice, we know that the Project rarely achieves half of what has been claimed for it. As often as not, its usefulness is blighted simply because the teacher insists on choosing the theme and ordering the work at all points. "We've got to do a project on docks, Mum, and I'm not a bit interested" was one little boy's disgusted comment when asked what he was doing in his new school. Which speaks for itself. Nor is the over-officious teacher the only nigger in the woodpile: there is the difficulty of ensuring that the centre-of-interest is equally shared by all those taking part. There is always the danger that the assertive child will want to run the whole show and that the more retiring types will merely tag along. A more serious defect is that

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(3) W. H. Kilpatrick: *The Project Method*, 49.

(4) J. A. Stevenson: *The Project Method of Teaching*, 43.

the job of work can rarely, if ever, be completed "in its natural setting" and therefore tends to be of a make-belief order. For the younger children this may be no bad thing but it is hardly calculated to meet the 10-year-old's growing demand for realism. In effect, most "projects" in the Junior School end up as models of one sort or another. With a few (maybe not so few) window-dressing touches by the teacher they make an effective display for open days, and there is no doubt that a good time is had by all in putting them together—but in the majority of cases no one need pretend that they are anything better than a pleasing relaxation from more formal lessons. Yet another weakness of the Project is that it tends to be self-contained; once it is completed there is more or less bound to be a hiatus in the rhythm of the work. We must, however, give it credit for accepting the children's interest as the chief growing-point in primary education. If the choice of topics tends to be limited—the same old "centres-of-interest" turning up year after year (Transport, Houses and Building, How we get our Food, Dress, etc.), the reason may be that juniors are driven to them because they are so closely bound up with primitive needs.

It was the conviction that interests such as these were the very stuff of primary education that gave rise to the early Activity Schools. The play pursuits of young children were followed up as clues and the interests which most pre-occupied them taken as pointers. These mock hunting games, this passion for making things, this love of movement, this craze for collecting—all the excitements of 10-year-old gangsterdom—became the school's business instead of being set aside as so many childish things. In the Decroly Schools children were encouraged to make the most of their so-called "ancestral needs"—the need for food, shelter, clothing, warmth and self-preservation. Conventional

schemes of work were scrapped in favour of a "study of nature conceived in the active sense, as a matter of practical experiences and effective utilization of the surroundings."<sup>5</sup> Simultaneously in France Ferrière and others were coming to the conclusion that what was most needed in primary education was a biological rather than a logical curriculum. For Ferrière, as for Dewey, manual work was to be the great panacea, the means by which all the functions of mind, heart and body were to be wrought into harmony. "In all the work spontaneity was to be taken as the sole barometer of success. In each successive stage (incidentally he subdivided the primary period into two, "the age of undifferentiated, immediate interests" from 7 to 9 years, and "the age of specialized, concrete interests" from 10 to 12), there was to be complete freedom for the manifestation of inner energies: as education rose progressively to its higher forms the learner's intellect was to develop *pari passu* with his character."<sup>6</sup>

Collective-class instruction . . . Dalton Plan . . . Winnetka Plan . . . the Activity School. Is it not evident that what has been taking place is none other than a gradual process of evolution? The fact that advance was swiftest where conditions were most favourable in no way detracts from the conviction that the advance is in the right direction and must continue.

Things being as they are, however, the schools must learn to walk before they run; for even if they wish to, they cannot switch to activity overnight. In any case, because its curriculum has to serve a dual purpose, the solution of the Junior School problem must be in the nature of a compromise. It may be that the advocates of the Winnetka Plan were right and that there is a fundamental distinction

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(5) cf. A. Hamaide: *The Decroly Class*.

(6) W. K. Richmond: *Blueprint for a Common School*, 97.

to be made between the "essential subjects" (*i.e.*, those which call for instruction and close supervision) and "creative and social activities" (*i.e.*, those which can be left more or less to the children's innate *savoir-faire*). It is as certain as can be that Ferrière was right in asserting that the kinds of activity which come naturally to the 7 to 9-year-olds are very different from those which appeal to the 10 to 12-year-olds—and that the difference needs to be shown in the time-table.

Remembering these many conditions, how can we best begin to produce order out of chaos? The first thing is to discriminate between what might be called the various modes of activity. Three main types have already emerged: the class-collective, the group, the individual. In each case, however, alternative treatments are possible, according to the degree of freedom allowed. If the list of modes is to be comprehensive it might result in the following:

### 1. *Collective Activities (directed).*

In other words—lessons. Listening and following instructions are, after all, activities that are not to be despised. When we say that the collective-class system kept the children "passive" we are, in a way, overstating the truth, though the exaggeration is pardonable. Straight teaching in Reading, Writing and Arithmetic will always be necessary but it should be used in moderation and not as the general rule. Variations of it may be found in lessons built round films and broadcasts. It is important that children of this age be trained in habits of looking and listening ("paying close attention,") and that they should do so as an audience.

For practical reasons, exercises involving the application of common techniques (Arithmetic, Written English, Singing, P.T. etc.), have simply got to be taken together—at any

rate usually—and provided that they do not monopolise too much of the time-table, there is no reason why they should not.

### *2. Collective Activities (controlled).*

Apart from instructional periods, it is clear that there are many things which most juniors, particularly the younger ones, like doing together, at the same time. Drawing and painting, for instance, or music and dancing. When the others are so obviously enjoying themselves, no child likes to be left out. The fact that it is the teacher who has done the choosing does not matter. Indeed, the 7-year-old, fresh from the Infants' School, may feel his security impaired unless he can join in activities that are arranged for him: he *wants* to be given a lead and the know-how. Even 10-year-olds, despite their greater self-reliance, are agreeable to taking part in activities *en masse*, especially if the activity cannot be engaged in in the teacher's absence. "It's not the same, sir, when you aren't there to referee," confided one little fellow after an evening game of football which had developed into a free-for-all.

### *3. Collective Activities (free).*

Since the class is too large a unit to function as a natural social group, opportunities for these will always be limited. Where the children have learned to work on their own, nevertheless, occasions may arise when they meet as a body and completely take charge of their own affairs. One calls to mind, for example, the class which, unbeknown to any of the staff, took it into their heads to organize a trip to Stratford, kept their penny-a-week club going for a term, worked out their own itinerary, chartered their own bus, finally issuing an invitation to teacher to come along too, if she cared to.

Precocious? *But these things can happen.* Again, in some schools, Friday afternoon is given over to an "Entertainment" arranged and performed by the various groups: with all ages taking part or forming the audience. On rare occasions, the school may function as a corporate body, as when the hymn-singing and order of morning service is left in the hands of the children themselves.

#### *4 and 5. Group Activities (directed or controlled).*

For a variety of purposes, most teachers find it convenient to split the class into sixes and sevens. If it is for reading there may be a "leader" chosen for his proficiency; or the composition of the group may be decided by its attainment in Arithmetic. Thus the "leader" in an "A" reading-group may find himself in a "C" group for Arithmetic. This arrangement (which dates back to the monitorial system, incidentally), permits of cross-classification in the tool-subjects without resorting to streaming. Or again, the teacher may find a group of children at a loose end, having finished a class exercise sooner than was expected, and set them to work for the nonce at some other occupation. "Finding them something to do" may at times be necessary, particularly in the early days when they are not yet accustomed to standing on their own feet—though it should be remembered that "so long as children of this age wait for the teacher to suggest what they shall do, so long has there been failure to tap their vast stores of energy and initiative."<sup>7</sup>

#### *6. Group Activities (free).*

Better, because more representative of the immediate interests which they reveal, are the groupings into

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(7) N. Catty: *Learning and Teaching in the Junior School*, 42.

which juniors fall of their own accord. It matters not that the groupings are constantly changing nor that they cut across age-range or I.Q. divisions. In addition, the type of occupation may vary from group to group. If "A" group are busy with their wall-painting, "B" group sawing and hammering away at their rabbit hutch, "C" group rehearsing their play in the hall, "D" group lost to the wide in their book corner, so much the better. If Johnny falls out with his cronies in "C" let him transfer to one of the others (if they will have him!). If Alice has finished her story and feels like watching the rehearsal, maybe she can lend a hand—and why not?

Meantime the teacher remains in the background offering at most a suggestion here and there, on the look-out all the while for the drifter, the meddler, or the occasional feckless one. Believe it or not, these latter are rarities. Where children have been given a run for their money it will be found that their social behaviour, if not exemplary by adult standards of etiquette, is orderly and intensely purposeful. Occasionally one comes across the odd-man-out who seems to fit in nowhere and who in all probability goes through life preferring to play the lone hand. He is best left to himself—and if he shows signs of not knowing what to do with himself, the teacher should be at hand, ready to take him aside and find out the cause of his shiftlessness. (Maybe he is all tied up inside and needs "bringing out," or maybe a good stiff assignment in Arithmetic will best serve his turn. Either way, the teacher's diagnosis of the case calls for shrewdness, sympathy and insight).

There is also the "pair-stage" to be taken account of, and this in itself is likely to create some delicate problems. There is a good deal to be said for letting juniors work two-by-two on occasion : the worst of it is that these attachments are not always of the order of a David-and-Jonathan relation-

ship! Two boys who have struck up a backstreet companionship may be no good to each other in school and a forced separation may be in their best interests. Juniors are friendly little folk, all the same, and by 8 or 9 the normal child will have his chosen buddy. The fact that at this age partnerships are apt to be short-lived does not mean that they can be ignored. It is for the teacher to decide at his discretion how best advantage can be taken of them.

[It may be thought that the distinction between 4, 5 and 6 is so slight as to be unreal. Supposing that the teacher is on such intimate terms with the children as to be accepted by them as "one of the gang," then it is evident that some of the groupings and the activities which give rise to them will, in fact, be guided by his suggestion. If, for example, he lets fall an idea which they seize upon and adopt as their own, the ensuing activity cannot be said to be entirely self-appointed. No matter: so long as they remain unconscious of this subtler influence the effect is much the same. What really determines the authenticity of group-activities is the answer to the question, "Who finds the jobs—the teacher or the children?" Very often a straight answer is not possible: the decision may be arrived at mutually. Where controls are so remote as not to be felt at all, it is obvious that the children will at times be under the impression that they are "having their own way" when in reality they are following someone else's lead.

In unscrupulous hands this illusion may be played upon with devastating effect, as happened when the Nazi propaganda machine took over the schools in Germany. The Hitler-jugend fell for "activity and experience" with a vengeance in more senses than one. Since juniors are so prone to suggestion there is always a danger that even the best-intentioned teacher may, without knowing it, impose too many of his own ideas on the conduct of affairs.]

*7 and 8. Individual Activities (directed or controlled).*

Occasionally it will be necessary for individual children to be given special attention. Mary is backward in reading and needs friendly coaching to bring her along. Tommy has spent more time than he ought at woodwork recently with the result that he is behind-hand with his arithmetic; he must be buttonholed and given a special task. Harry's handwriting is slovenly this week: is it a ticking-off that he needs or a heart-to-heart talk to get at the root of the temporary loss of form?

Treatment of this kind should be reserved for special occasions. Every child wants individual attention if he can get it, and with numbers what they are, the teacher's life would soon become impossible if he tried to cope with every request. Only when the children have got into the way of using their own capabilities can he begin to see which of their difficulties are insurmountable without his assistance and just where a helping hand is really indispensable. It being an understood thing in the Activity School that each child is on trust and responsible for his own progress, the teacher is to some extent released from the onus of keeping them up to scratch. Not altogether, however. There is always the dullard, the slacker and the "problem" type to be reckoned with.

It should not be assumed from this that "free-activities" and "children's time" are granted as concessions which may be taken away for this or that shortcoming or offence. In the Junior School it should always be made plain to the children that certain basic attainments are necessary and therefore expected of them. Once that is understood, the question of their not putting their backs into the work should never arise. If the teacher knows his job, there is no reason why forfeits or penalties should be incurred. It would be an exaggeration to say that the "middle core"

can safely look after themselves; but certainly the teacher will be more at liberty to devote himself to special cases than he is under the existing classroom conditions. The exceptionally bright pupil who has a flair for arithmetic and the nitwit who has none at all may rightly claim more of his time, and if he sees fit he can give it. But it *must* be "Teacher's Time!"

### 9. *Individual Activities (free).*

These should be kept absolutely free, without conditions of any kind as how they are to be spent. If at first a child does nothing at all with his free-time he should be left until he sees the error of his ways.<sup>8</sup>

These are the testing-out periods of the Junior School, in which the teacher's function is to observe, to mark, learn and inwardly digest what is going on around him. What straws in the wind can he detect? Which hobby-horses are likely to prove useful and which interests significant? Janet in the corner has lugged an orange-box to school this morning and is rigging it up as a hand loom. (A promising venture, that, which may lead Heaven knows where later on; already some of the others have envious eyes upon it. More orange-boxes to-morrow!) John is filling in his diary. Ragamuffin Tim is swallowing the latest atrocities of "The Thunderer," (not altogether approved of. How long will it be before he takes a hint and joins the Public Library?)

(8) Cases of children who are seemingly incapable of finding their own occupations are not uncommon. In one instance a 10 year old girl, transferred from a formal to an activity-type school did nothing (literally nothing) for three whole weeks, at the end of which it suddenly dawned on her that the responsibility of creating an interest was no longer the teacher's but her own. In view of this time-lag, the faint-hearted teacher is likely to be appalled at the poor response and the amount of time wasted in the initial stages. Whether or not he decides to go through with it and give free-activity a fair trial will depend as much upon his tolerance as upon his having the courage of his convictions. It is no use pretending that the response from the children will be immediate or electrifying when the chances are that most of them will get off to a slow start. If it is not to be a false start, the teacher must resist any temptation to go back on his decision to leave the children to their own devices. On the principle of *recouper pour mieux sauter* it may be necessary to countenance some waste of time at the beginning if it is to be more than recouped later on.

Michael and Pat have finished with their nature note books and gone off to clean out the rabbit-hutch. (How they worship dumb animals! Will the penny drop when the doe litters?)

In a sense these are the only true "free-activities." They, more than anything else, give rise to, and set the tone for, the rest of the work. They are the great seed-bed of ideas. Who knows? Janet's orange-box may be the means of starting up a term's project on weaving. Better still, these free-periods encourage the child in the feeling that school is not exclusively an institution where orders are to be carried out and that something more than mute observance is expected of him.

Now two questions will doubtless be exercising the minds of many teachers reading this. First: can this anarchy be tolerated under the auspices of the conventional school set-up? The intention may be good but what about the disturbance and the noise? What about those of us who are in upper rooms, not to mention the unfortunates on the ground floor?

Aye, there's the rub. There is no dodging the fact that many school premises are such that silence and immobility become almost as necessary as a Rule of Law. Yet there is no need to imagine that juniors engaged in free-activity create more hubbub than is caused, say, in singing or indoor P.T. If things are going as they should, they may be as quiet as mice. On the other hand, if constraint is to be avoided, the best solution is to use a room set apart where they can talk and bang away to their hearts' content, without making too much of a nuisance of themselves to the rest of the school. The only other alternative is to limit them to activities that can be undertaken in the class-room desks, and though this is a second-best solution, the choice is still wide enough to make the experiment worthwhile.

Secondly : how much time can we afford for this kind of activity? The answer will vary in accordance with the amount of faith which the teacher has in the children's capacity for self-development. In all probability the initial allowance will be grudging, accompanied by a mental reservation which protests that the whole concession is a waste of time. So it may be unless the teacher interprets it aright and uses it to some purpose. On the other hand, it should never be supposed that free individual activity is better left to home-and-leisure time nor that it is an unwarranted intrusion into the more serious business of school life. There is a world of difference between the child's playtime in its private setting and in its manifestations when among others of the same age. *There*, more than anywhere else, he learns by example what it is to become purposeful. It is not just that interests are, like measles, catching : in a social atmosphere they begin to take on a higher aim and definition. In some schools where these activities have been tried out, a daily allocation of 30-45 minutes free time has been found adequate, at any rate for the younger children. For the 9 to 11's, who know what they want to do and whose chosen occupations are likely to be more ambitious, the best plan would seem to be that of devoting one morning or afternoon per week to work of this kind. At least an arrangement of this kind enables Janet to get down to her job of weaving and to make some visible progress, as well as confirming her in habits of sustained work. Possibly it is not every junior that can be so enthralled as to spend a whole afternoon by himself with a single objective in view; but many can and will do so willingly. Others may lose interest in their particular piece of work and be happier taking part in some free group-activity. As there is bound to be one or more of the latter going forward, indeed, the temptation to do so may at times be irresistible.

Reviewing, now, the full range of these nine modes of activity, it will be seen that the old-fashioned elementary school had neither time nor use for more than the first two, with the possible exception of 7 (Individual Activities—directed). Somewhere in their organization, most present day Junior Schools find a place for 4 and 7 in addition. What we look for ultimately is a school in which the full range will be represented.

So much for modes. Having considered the various guises which activity may assume, it remains to examine the activities themselves, more especially to ascertain how best they can replace the existing subject-divisions of the timetable. In this connection, most of the suggestions which have been put forward hitherto have been tentative or so amorphous as to be of little value for the general practitioner. For instance, it has been said that: "Four activity divisions cover the main subjects usually taught to the junior child—"Language and thought" explains its own content; "living and growing up" (comprising the natural sciences and the child's physical environment); "how many and how big" (number in its various applications), and "movement" practised communally as part of natural growth and development."<sup>9</sup>

Words, words, words. The weakness of this kind of planning consists in the utter lack of definition in the terms it employs. Which is to be preferred, plain "Arithmetic" or "How many and how big?" an abstraction so vague in dimension as to be more precious than practical? Hardly less tentative are the three general divisions—Physical Education, Handwork and Speech—under which the Scottish Report on Primary Education grouped the fundamental

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(9) *Teaching Junior Children: New Ideas and Methods* (T.E.S. September 21st, 1946.)

subjects.<sup>10</sup> More and precise and therefore more serviceable is the categorical list of activities given in Miss M. V. Daniel's book, "Activities in the Primary School." This includes :

1. Physical Activities.	(Physical Training, Games, Dancing, Rest, Meals, Hygiene).
2. Environment Activities.	(Local Geography, Local History, Local Nature Study).
3. Constructional Activities.	(Handwork, Simple Physical and Biological Science).
4. Creative Activities.	(Art, Craft, Music, Movement, Creative Writing).
5. Imaginative Activities.	(Literature, History, Geography, Drama, Religious Knowledge).
6. Tool Subjects.	(Reading, Writing, Arithmetic).
7. The School Setting.	(The basis and background of the whole process of education, and of the formation of moral, social and æsthetic standards). <sup>11</sup>

As it stands, the list contains a number of anomalies. Is it not rather odd to find Religious Knowledge under the heading of "Imaginative Activities"—and why should Dancing be included in the same category as P.T. when Movement is considered as creative? Nor is it very obvious how the School Setting (by which presumably is meant the invigorating tone which results from activity-organization generally), can be defended as a separate activity.

But these are minor criticisms. By and large, the list represents a thoroughgoing attempt to reduce activities into concrete terms and to bring them within a recognisable framework. Without some such classification, as the same author remarks, there is a real danger that the activity-approach may result in "a collection of miscellaneous

(10) In justice to the compilers it is only fair to recall their own statement that: "While retaining this division as a general guide in the following discussion of individual subjects, we wish to make it clear at this point that we have no intention or need to develop it fully in this Report." (Para 47, p. 30).

(11) Op. cit. pp. 89-94.

information with little or no connection, producing an unorganized body of knowledge, or a body of knowledge centering round a topic rather than a subject. A basis of knowledge common to all children at the end of the Primary School period appears, therefore, to be essential."<sup>12</sup>

A *basis* of knowledge, be it noted—not knowledge for its own sake. We may think that by the age of 11 plus the average child should be conversant with the Four Rules of Number and Money, but the way to begin is not by posing it as a dogma. True, the teacher must have a rough working idea of the ground to be covered during the four-years' course, but that ground is not to be measured out in "knowledge to be gained and facts to be stored," as we have seen. To be organic, a basis of common knowledge can only emerge through the expression of dynamic needs. In previous chapters we have stated the case for recognizing the crucial importance of allowing as much free-play as possible to the impulses of juniors and for letting the main direction of the work follow the lines which these suggest. Looking at the curriculum from this angle, the following would seem to be the main divisions into which activities fall (always remembering how inseparably they are interconnected and how they shade-off into one another):

1	MOVEMENT	—self-expression and self-awareness developing through physical rhythms. Mime. Dance.
2	LISTENING	—to instructions, stories, poetry, music; broadcasts; occasional lessons in Geography, History, Scripture, Nature Study, etc.
3	USING THE SPOKEN WORD	—asking questions, making oneself understood, drama.
4	ACTS OF WORSHIP	—religious observance, prayer, ritual.

(12) *Ibid.* 84.

5	ART AND DESIGN	—drawing, painting, modelling.
6	CRAFT	—making things, practical occupations using a variety of material. Woodwork, handwork, needlework. "What it's for" and "how it works."
7	MUSIC MAKING	—singing, singing games, percussion work, recorders, etc.
8	OUT OF DOORS ACTIVITIES	—a. Local Studies. b. Natural History.
9	PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES	—P.T., games, habits of healthy living.
10	READING	—use of books for information and for pleasure.
11	WRITING	
12	ARITHMETIC	

These are the essentials.

While it would be merely asking for trouble to suggest that this table is compiled in any strict order of priorities,<sup>13</sup> it does show order of a kind ranging from the infant's naive bodying-forth of feelings to the rather more abstract mental reckoning of the 11-year-old scholar. Without being altogether too indeterminate, these twelve divisions cover the essential business of the Junior School and allow scope for that several-dimensional training which we are continually urging. There is room in them for the exercise of the faculties of Sensation, Intuition, Feeling and Thought; and

(13) The position of "Acts of Worship" is obviously controversial. Rationalists will object that it is futile to begin with religious observance before the child is capable of understanding its implications. Despite this, there is every reason to believe that any psychology which denies the existence of the religious impulse as being among the fundamental needs of human life, is as false as it is inadequate. It was this impulse, rather than the possession of a superior intelligence, which distinguished primitive man from the ape; therefore it must be accorded high place in any scheme of activities. At the first level, being experienced rather than "known about", religion cannot but be practised; and this irrespective of denominational issues.

room for an education in which visual, plastic, kinaesthetic, constructive—as well as verbal—elements may function as one.

On the face of it, perhaps, the prospectus may not look to be very different from the sort of thing which is usually attempted in the Junior School. So far as "useful knowledge" is concerned its content is probably much the same as that of the usual subject divisions. Are we then to assume that all that has been done amounts to nothing more than a change of nomenclature? By no means. There is a genuine difference in the change of emphases, in the adoption of new values and criteria, in the new direction given to the work. That which was formally "taught" in separate and unrelated "subjects" becomes unified in activity.

Teachers are frequently reminded that activity is not another subject but a method. Educationally speaking, it is more, and better, than that; it is an attitude of mind. More important than the labels which we affix to them are the ways in which activities are undertaken; which is why this chapter has been so much taken up with examining the differences between "directed," "controlled" and "free" activity in relation to the individual child, the group and the class-collective. Complicated as the problem is, one thing is clear: that we cannot hope to get the relationship right unless it is based on a correct understanding of the social behaviour of the children themselves—to which end the first step must be to accord some measure of freedom of action. Only when that has been done can the balance between formal-instruction, group-work and individual occupation, begin to work itself out. Only when the full range of activities is catered for—and catered for in these multifarious ways—can it be said that an adequate curriculum for the Junior School has been devised.

SECTION II  
SOME NOTES ON ESSENTIALS

## I.

### MOVEMENT AND THE DANCE.

Most Infant's Schools attempt some teaching of Movement, either for its own sake or as the mode of response most natural to the enjoyment of music at this stage. It is to be regretted that there is no great development of this in the Junior School.

Of all arts, the Dance probably came first. Long before it occurred to him to represent them in cave-drawings, primitive man gave vent to his feelings in expressive gesture. Yet even in these crude origins, there was a fetish element which gave added meaning and excitement to the bodily movement. For him the Dance was more than a pleasing social grace : it was a stern necessity, part of a sacred ritual. If it be true, as has been said, that when the Australian Blackfellow was no longer free to dance the rites of his ancient faith there was no alternative for him but extinction, may it not also be true that the sources of spiritual life in civilized society have dried up for much the same reason? The disruptive forces of our time may easily spring from starved and thwarted impulses which, because they find no outlet in creative activity, become destructive. Sublimation cannot altogether avert their ruinous outburst : they must be directed from the beginning to their own original purposes.

All the evidence goes to show that impulses of this kind, though largely obscured by the conditions of civilized life, are present in all young children, irrespective of temperament. In some they are so pronounced as to be irresistible; in others so evanescent that for want of encouragement they abort or disappear underground.

There is a growing body of opinion which sees in the "Free Dance" approach a means of resuscitating this primordial urge and restoring it to something like its

original function. Without being too doctrinaire about it (and "Modern Dance" fans have a way of being extremely doctrinaire!) it does seem that this approach lends itself to the activity-method as to the manner born. First and foremost, it offers a training in the intuitive way of life that is *sui generis*. It is singularly appropriate, also, to a stage of development in which thought, sensation and emotion are interfused. For the young child life is movement.

Because they are so delightfully unselfconscious, juniors react wholeheartedly to one another in dance-movement; and because the response is so vital, the communication of physical gesture is for them more meaningful than any other form of language. Too often this nice attunement of body and mind is lost in later years because nothing is made of it at the time when it is most open to cultivation: and who knows what the subsequent loss in sensibilities may be? Once again utilitarianism and the Puritanical streak are to blame for the missing of opportunities; and meanwhile we salve our consciences by thinking the dance is cissy stuff and no part of our duties. Yet any assessment of the facts of behaviour points to the conclusion that movement should by rights be allowed a place in the main stream of primary education. To accord it first place, as we have done, is not merely to be provocative: it is the logical consequence of any policy that seeks to put first things first.

It cannot be stressed too strongly that "dance movement" should be purposeful, not only to attain eloquence in the language of the dance, but to assist the healthy and harmonious development of the human being.<sup>1</sup> On this point, unfortunately, there is the same cleavage of opinion as that which divides the "free-activity" and the "formal teaching" schools of thought. On the one hand the argument has it that Folk and Country Dancing are so much dead

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(1) D. Jordan: *The Dance as Education*, 8.

wood and impose too many restrictions on creative movement : on the other, that the traditional is never dead and that the set dances are in every way more in accord with the simple graces of childhood. It is not for us to decide how this quarrel is to be composed or which side has the better of a confusing argument. It is clear enough that if it is to be educative, movement must allow scope for individual interpretation as well as submission to the dance-pattern, but one cannot altogether stifle the suspicion that to allow uninhibited freedom may somehow be akin to playing with fire. Possibly the best way out of the impasse is to say that true dance always imposes its own discipline. It is ordered by natural laws, any offence against which is immediately sensed by participants and onlookers alike. As with everything else, there are dances and dances, and no good can come of making immoderate claims for this or that particular style, since the virtues of one may be totally different from those of the other.

In view of the natural flair for it which juniors evince, however, there is probably as much to be learned from free-expression in the Dance as had already been discovered in the realm of child-art. It is possible that a child may be put through all the paces of Country and Folk dancing without ever touching off the vital spark that is latent inside him—though if that were so it would not necessarily imply the removal of such dances from the school's repertoire. Still, devotees who ought to know are firm in the conviction that "once any imposed form of expression is introduced, the whole immense value of this early acceptance of self-expression is spoilt."<sup>2</sup>

What is this immense value which attaches to spontaneous, unrehearsed movement? It is the courage of being oneself, the quickening and refining of inner fibres, the original

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(2) Op. cit. 44.

communication of feelings and ideas and the alert response to the display of them in others. In a word, it is the development of poise. If this is true, then the Dance should not be regarded as informal P.T. nor as an offshoot of the Music lesson, but as having a place of its own : and, since we have characterised the junior child as a kinæsthetic, there can be no more important activity. It should never be treated as an extra, nor as being in any way optional, but rather as an integral part of the primary phase in education.

That of all the arts, Dance is the one which has been most neglected in the schools needs no argument; and the reasons for it are not far to seek. Thanks to the Reformation, the Industrial Revolution and the many influences sometimes referred to as "the progress of civilization," the Dance has become almost a lost art, degenerating into the politely effete shufflings of the modern ballroom; and it is only in very recent years that signs of revival have become at all evident. Few people, whether in schools or anywhere else, thought of it at all seriously or have seen that there might be more value in it than that of mannered deportment.

Let it be clear once and for all that when we speak of "poise" far more is inferred than physical control or even social grace. "Poise," as usually understood is the indefinable gift which a Public School upbringing is said to bestow; but, as used here, the word has another meaning. No doubt it is of debased coinage. More profound than the self-assurance that comes of being at ease in a certain class of society is the self-assurance that results when all the mental functions have been nursed into harmony. Is it to be wondered at that modern life, with all its stresses, neuroses and maladjustments, is lacking in this quality of inner-poise? David danced before the Lord with all his might; but that little David should dance in Sunday School has always

been unthinkable. A kind of stoic prudery has spread like a creeping paralysis through all our modern systems of education.

It is because they afford the supreme example of activity and experience combined—particularly for young children—that Movement and the Dance need to be reintroduced. Not merely as a therapeutic, either. It is arguable that no true æsthetic is to be hoped for later on unless it is founded on a kinæsthetic training in the early years. Self-control that is bred of bodily control, sensibilities that are distilled from cruder emotions, level-headedness, unashamed sincerity and honest joy—these are some of the benefits conferred by purposeful movement. If only we know how to go about it, the dance can contribute that most precious of all qualities in cultured living—style.

It has to be admitted, however, that very few teachers *do* know how to go about it. More so than with other activities, they are held back by feelings of embarrassment or the fear of dabbling in something that they do not rightly understand. Those of us who have seen “Free Dance” in action are impressed, and at the same time slightly appalled, by the possibilities that are revealed in children. This glimpse we get of childhood with the lid off is a little unnerving: we are not altogether sure that we like its demoniac air. And the strange fervours that are evoked—are they altogether to be commended? we ask. Supposing that all our misgivings *are* prompted by puritanism, does not the teacher in charge require to have a genius for this sort of work or at least to be specially trained? Even if we wish to try, can we trust ourselves to give it a trial? We are told that the techniques involved are simple, yet the movement to introduce them into the schools is hedged about with such a high-faluting mystique that no one knows where to begin. There is a desperate need for some kind of official pro-

nouncement on the matter, for short-courses, demonstrations, and discussions among teachers. Before Movement and the Dance can take the place they deserve in the curriculum, the whole issue will have to be brought into the open and light to bear upon what, after all, need not be so dark a problem.

Meantime one can only guess that the difficulties of handling dance-movement with juniors are not so great that they cannot be mastered by ordinary mortals. The inspiration is not teacher-given. Its mainspring exists in the children, only waiting for the touch that will release it. Since the felicities of child-art in no way depend on the teacher's expertise there is no reason to think that the child dancing must be in the hands of a balletomane. In this connection, the evidence of someone outside the profession is worth quoting : "I have been enormously impressed by the fact, at first puzzling, that the best results could not be correlated with any system of teaching or any academic qualifications in the teacher. Sometimes the best work comes from schools where an art-master or mistress as such does not exist. My first conclusion was that good results depended on the creation, in the school or class, of a sympathetic atmosphere, and to a certain extent I still think this is true. But if by "atmosphere" one means the amenities which money can buy, then it is not true. The right atmosphere can exist in a village school, or in a dingy barracks in some industrial city. The atmosphere is the creation of the teacher, and to create an atmosphere of spontaneity, of happy childish industry, is the main and perhaps the only secret of successful teaching. To do this the teacher does not need more than a minimum of technical or academic qualifications."<sup>3</sup>

## USING THE SPOKEN WORD

"Stop talking, hands behind!" used to be the old word of command, repeated at five-minute intervals throughout the school day; and for many of us who are not so old the imperative remains as a painful memory. Swish went the cane and back we crawled to our desks, smarting for an offence that was none of our creating. Apart from the rare release which came of "asking to leave the room," the only excuses for opening one's mouth at all were for reading aloud or that dreaded moment when one was called upon for recitation. And today, as a result, the streets are full of men and women whose conversation is largely made up of newspaper clichés and slang sayings, whose vocabulary is pitifully slight. We read and think and have opinions but how many of us are as articulate as we could wish? Freedom of Speech may be the Britisher's birthright, but what a mockery it could be when there was no Freedom from Fear in the schools!

When a child has had a significant experience his first impulse is to tell someone about it, at once. If he is curious he must needs ask questions and be satisfied there and then. Unless he is under-stimulated there will be many things that he has got to get off his chest—and what better place can there be for sharing excitement than the school? Juniors are incorrigible gossips, fairly bursting with small-talk. Can the flow of words be directed to a creative end without causing chaos in the classroom or encouraging pointless tittle-tattle? It is true that the rigours of oppressive discipline are not what they were and that the more humane state of affairs now obtaining in the schools enables the teacher to talk things over with the pupils and to get their point of view. The greater intimacy in teacher-pupil

relationships is undoubtedly one of the most wholesome educational developments in recent years. The word-game, the spelling-bee, quizzes, lecturettes and oral composition have each, in their little ways, done something to provide exercise for the putting of thoughts into words. It is to be doubted, however, whether the Junior School has yet reached the stage when it can be said that the Spoken Word is being put to its full use.

The infant talks best with his body, but as movement tends at times to express itself in mime so, in turn, mime bursts into drama. When emotion is stepped up to the right pitch, imagination and thought take over and, as we say, the words come. In a way, then, mime is incipient drama : and it is as a development arising out of Movement that dramatic activity in the Junior School is best understood. We may roundly declare, as many do, that the development is due to a dramatic instinct in children, or we may prefer to attribute it to the desire to act and leave it at that. Either way, there is no denying that in their free play, juniors love nothing better than to act-out imaginary situations and to lose their own identities by assuming others. The 7-year-old who wriggles on the floor because he wants to "be a snake" and 10-year-old who charges around, shouting "Look out! I'm a bomber" are unaware of anything ludicrous in their behaviour. For adults who displayed this uncanny virtuosity for identifying themselves with monsters and inanimate objects, a mental-home would be the proper institution. What is downright lunacy in us, however, may be the sanest thing possible for juniors.

As with other activities, the danger is that we allow adult conceptions to stand in the way of the working-out of this natural impulse. Inevitably, we think of the class-room theatre in terms of a raised stage, with scene, proscenium, costume and audience. Above all, and worst of all, we think

of it as the performance of a play that is already written.

The children's ideas are very different. For them, play-making's the thing. Every junior is a born actor, one who lives from moment to moment.

"as if his whole vocation  
Were endless imitation."

Left to himself, he will get inside a part and play an imaginary character to the life. He wants neither stage nor audience. Dressing up, to be sure, has a huge appeal and when occasion demands it is wonderful what guises he will assume in his glad-rags, with a few odds and ends as properties. But even these are adjuncts that he can dispense with; his imagination is so boundless that it easily outleaps both time and place. Where the dramatic impulse has been caught in time or has not been conditioned out of him, the child acts best when he is playing without script, property or stage-setting—"when he is so absorbed that he acts all round his body, unfettered, unconcerned with angles, grouping or lines of sight, and with plenty of space to play in . . . . Another point is that but for a few exceptions (and there are good reasons for these) children want to act themselves, not to watch. The nearest they get to being an audience when they are free and happy is to be relaxed temporarily, but their absorption in what others do and their facial and finger reactions are so marked as to warrant our calling this only a resting form of participation."<sup>1</sup>

If advantage is to be taken of the educational values inherent in drama, the teacher must not allow his own ideas of what is right or wrong to take precedence over the children's. No good can come of putting words into the mouths of juniors nor of hurrying them into speech. "When expression is real, living, informed with personal feeling, percep-

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(1) P. Slade: *Children's Theatre* (Publication of the Birmingham Educational Drama Association, January, 1948.)

tion—the child's own perception of things—must needs be behind it.”<sup>2</sup>

When so many conditions are to be observed, it may appear that the teacher's position is something of a dilemma. If he is not to interfere and the children are to act as the spirit moves them, what then can he do? Everyone knows what shapeless rigmaroles class-plays can be, how lost children can be when it comes to the construction of plots, how much time can be wasted in agreeing upon even the simplest theme. It is here, surely, that the teacher's main contribution can be made: not as producer or stage-manager (—usually there will be none—) but as adviser and consultant. By helping them to get their tangled notions shipshape or by discussing the action with them beforehand so that they have a rough-and-ready framework in which the play-to-be can be worked out, he fulfils a genuine need. Maybe the boys want to play at crooks and detectives. Fair enough—but have they thought out the details? A smash-and-grab raid, hey? The idea has possibilities: why not go into a huddle and get organized? And what about the girls, still havering as usual about fairies? There was that Hans Andersen story the other day—why not see what can be done with that?

The great thing is to get the children started and then to leave them to it. It may be a story, a bit from a newspaper, some incident in History, some aspect of life in foreign lands or something that has cropped up in their recent experience that provides the initial impetus. If at first the children are wooden and unresponsive (and if they come from formal schools the chances are that they will be), the teacher may have to work back from an actual script, watching for the part which obviously “gets” them. After the first run-through a discussion is held on the spot. Everyone

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(2) Edmond Holmes: *What is and what might be*, 184.

agrees that the high-spot of the play was the entry of the Robber Chief. Very well, let them all "be" the Robber Chief for a few moments. Tim is seen to be brandishing an invisible sword. What's that for? "Sir, I was pretending it was a dragon." Fine (there was no dragon in the original version) "and who'll play the dragon?" "Me, sir! me, sir! me, sir!" Before long, it is a case of don't-look-now but a children's play is well on the way to being created. Perhaps music would help? No matter if the play seems a raggle-taggle affair, without sequence or division into scenes. The teacher will do well if he refrains from stepping in, unless, of course, it peters out, in which case a hint or two or a fresh start may be necessary. If Tim is so pleased with himself that he begins to show off the best corrective is to ignore him. Not until they feel that they are being left alone, that there will be no hold-ups and that they will not be ridiculed for "silliness," will the children really let go, revealing themselves in action. Like shy hedgehogs, they may be slow to unfurl. It may take eight weeks or a term to get them thoroughly limbered up, physically and emotionally. During that time, they gain in group-sensitivity. The gaucheries and hesitations of their early fumbling attempts disappear; they no longer bump into each other or stand around at a loss to know what to do. Speech comes in its own good time, halting at first but gradually picking up confidence and occasionally stammering into flights of eloquence. At times the atmosphere is filled with shared excitement, in which the individual becomes immersed in the group. It is then, when it is completely absorbed, that the child's play-acting is most genuine and sincere. Maybe he strikes an attitude and repeats it again and again, regardless of what the others are doing. Mime, ritual, pageantry, mock-heroics, slapstick and knockabout—it is all here. Maybe out of it all there comes that moment when the in-

tuitive flash occurs, the sudden recognition of experience deep beyond the reach of words. Maybe it is gone before the teacher, looking on as an unseen spectator, realises it. Sometimes, unexpectedly, the little actors break off as if the fit has left them, and say quite simply, "That's all."

Maybe, too, this is all put a trifle too glibly? What happens when there is no school hall available?—and how does one ensure that every child in a class of 50 has a significant part to play? Where space is limited, the only solution may be to let the main protagonists work in relays, with some kind of audience-participation from the others. Where space is no object, it may be possible to have as many as three group-plays going on at the same time, though this can only be done where the children have learned to forget themselves and their surroundings. Notwithstanding all the disadvantages of overcrowding and lack of equipment, drama in the Junior School is the one activity which may be engaged in at any time and in any place. To some extent the overcrowding and the lack of equipment may be a convenience. After all, the Shakespearean theatre was hardly notable for roominess and against so bare a background as the "Globe's" the spoken word was heard in its full impact. Since the child acts best when he is most oblivious, accoutrements are a hindrance rather than an aid. What we are looking for is not a stage performance but something more in the nature of a floor-show in which audience and players are one company.

Exhibitionism is at all times to be avoided. But this does not mean that more "finished" productions will be entirely ruled out. Nor does it mean that slovenly enunciation and bad habits of speech will go uncorrected. At times the children will not be satisfied with their improvised playlet and will want to work it up to something like concert-pitch. The 10-year-olds may want to write out parts and "do it pro-

perly." Once the creative impulse has had its way, the teacher may see fit (but only by common agreement and consent), to add the finishing touches. Little harm and great good may result from putting on one of these modest interludes as part of the Friday afternoon "entertainment" for the whole school. The trouble is that once this is done there is a tendency for the adventitious to creep in again—speech-training, stage decorum and the seven deadly sins of amateur dramatics. It cannot be over-stressed that the educational aims of child-drama are not the same as those commonly understood in the theatre. They transcend them. Drama is *not* just another subject in the time-table. The 7-year-old busy with his purchases at the class-room shop or the 8-year-old Red Indian playing-out Hiawatha is as much engaged in drama as the 10-year-old who dresses up and learns his piece by heart—only more so. In the first case the time-table may tell us that Arithmetic is the subject in hand, in the second, Geography, in the third, English, but whichever it is the activity is essentially the same. Naturally, the teacher will look for some tangible outcome from these play-pretences. Facility in the use of money and measurement will be the better from being practised. Interest in North America will be more meaningful later on because it has been "lived." Similarly, there is an easy transition from the spoken to the written word. When the time comes for it and what has been said *must* be committed to paper, written English will show a vivacity that is too often absent from formal compositions. Yet all these benefits which accrue are incidental and subsidiary to the main purpose of drama in the Junior School, which is no less than the achievement of self-hood.

Of his own free will, the child plays, pretends, imitates, imagines a world outside himself. Only by trying out his feelings and fantasies in personification does his world-view

gradually begin to be objective. Drama converts this chaotic experience to a constructive end, giving coherence and direction to a tendency that might otherwise easily become pointless. In short, it is an art of becoming, in which the young pretender finds justification for his pretences: never more so than when out of play is born—the Play.

## 3.

## THE WRITTEN WORD.

The semi-illiterate 8-year-old who wrote: "I lick you awfly, be my swittart" and smuggled it to the little lady of his fancy under cover of the desks was beginning the right way. At least he had found a heartfelt need to commit himself to pen-and-ink.

It is often affirmed that good prose style comes from having something worthwhile to say and saying it clearly. Whatever may be said of the Paters and Ruskins of the literary world, the truth of this is nowhere to be seen more clearly than in the written work of the Junior School. There it must find the source of its inspiration in the activities which are suggested by the children's own interests. Writing is itself an activity, perhaps the one in which all faculties are most closely co-ordinated: and like all activities it cannot be purposeful unless it fulfills a need. Admittedly it presupposes a technique of its own—the handling of pen, letter-formation and the rudiments of spelling—and practice in these is necessary *before* the mental stage is reached when the setting down of words on paper is inevitable, or at any rate the appropriate thing to do. As in Reading there is a progression from the thing to the picture and from the picture to the printed symbol, so in Writing there is a transition from the Spoken to the Written Word. Eventually there comes a time—it may be after a visit to the Zoo or circus, say—when the child is so bubbling over with experience that merely to talk about it is unsatisfying: he must needs adopt some more tangible mode of communication. Drawings and paintings are all very well in their way, but they leave out far too much for his liking: he realises that action is more adequately recounted in sentence-form and that what he has seen is more intelligible in a written account.

Perhaps it is some observation that he has made in the course of a Nature Walk or his part in a classroom play which he wants to write-up. So long as the desire is there, the choice of subject-matter is immaterial.

In the lower half of the Junior School the golden rule should be to have lots and lots of oral expression, treating lettering as part of art-and-craft and building up vocabulary and spelling through word-games. Even at this early stage, however, the children should be encouraged to keep a methodical account of their free-activities, either what they have done or what they intend to do. "Today I painted a ship", "I am sowing seeds", "I am making a crokydile"—simple entries of this sort may be developed later on as a regular daily record, which enables the young workman to keep track of his various occupations and to see progress in them. (Never let it be forgotten that juniors have shortest memories).

Generally speaking, it seems wise to regard written work at this stage as a straightforward practical affair, leaving correctness and finesse to take care of themselves. Verse-speaking and flights of fancy description are not for most juniors, nor are purple passages to be expected of them. Far better the unvarnished account, reported from actual observation and the plain statement of what has been done. Punctuation (particularly the use of full stops!) may to some extent, be picked up from Reading, but it will come more readily where the writing is functional—that is, where the words answer a felt need. (How many candidates sit for School Certificate without knowing what a sentence is, simply because their heads are stuffed with undigested information that has never had time to sort itself out into shape or meaning?) The aim of creative writing in the Junior School is to give another string to the bow of self-expression, *not* to produce fine style and impeccable

grammar. The standards of child-art are not the same as those of the Royal Academy. We do not cross out the 9-year-old's drawing because its perspectives are all wrong and its colour schemes not to our taste. Why then should we be so free with the blue-pencil in marking what he writes? The 10-year-old essayist who wrote:

“The cow is a mammal. It has six sides—right, left, and upper and below. At the back it has a tail on which hangs a brush. With this it sends the flies away so that they do not fall into the milk. The head is for the purpose of growing horns and so that the mouth can be somewhere. The horns are to butt with and the mouth is to moo with. Under the cow hangs the milk. It is arranged for milking. When people milk, the milk comes and there is never an end to the supply. How the cow does it I have not yet realised but it makes more and more. The cow has a fine sense of smell; one can smell it far away. That is the reason for the fresh air in the country,”—

may have been naive, but as Sir Ernest Gowers points out, she has unconsciously achieved style.<sup>1</sup> In its simple sincerity, balance of phrase and businesslike choice of words, this passage strikes the authentic junior note. It is *living* prose, not a dry husk of words strung together in a purely formal arrangement.

It will be objected that because writing must obey set rules the analogy from “free expression” methods in art teaching is a false one. Even so, great care should be taken to ensure that a distinction is made between formal grammatical exercises and the child's original authorship. Strict marking might well be reserved for the former. Within limits, the latter should be regarded as personal to the writer and kept inviolate. As with his toy-making and

(1) cf. *Plain Words*, 31.

private collections, so with his diaries, note-books and stories: the child should be encouraged in his pride of possession. Always to insist on scrupulous correctness is, literally, to cramp his style. One of the greatest faults in primary education has been this premature forcing of the young idea into a vehicle of words that was never meant for it.

The child will only write willingly and unfeignedly when he is truly stimulated. Very often it will be found necessary to command him to keep up-to-date with his diary entries, and if he can get away with it he may well shirk the job of giving an account of his observations on an out-of-school visit: but now and then there comes the time when the impulse seizes him and he *wants* to write his head off. What starts the hare inside him when this happens we may not rightly know, but we can be sure that it springs from a vivid experience. Which is why in activity schools we no longer get the snivelling excuse "Please, I can't think of any more" at the end of a smudged, unwilling page of scrawl. Nowhere is the tonic action which results from out-and-abouting and from the shared excitement of group-activities more evident than in Written-work. The blank page is no longer viewed by a blank mind, as so much space that must be filled up somehow or other. Instead, the pen becomes as much a tool of delight as hammer and chisel, drawing-pencil or painting-brush. Particularly if the teacher can so contrive it that writing becomes linked up with activities that serve an obviously practical purpose. Many a child has been lured into writing his first full-length story through bookcraft. Cutting out, gumming, decorating and illustrating may have been his first-loves but how the work is enhanced if he knows that what goes between the covers is to be his own composition! Often when he is taken up with it page follows page so profusely that he will stick at nothing else for a whole afternoon

or more. Quantity is not altogether to be despised, either : at least it shows that the flow of words is finding some sort of outlet. The little penman with his reams of loosely strung unparagraphed sentences is learning to enjoy this writing business. We think it all to the good that he should be free to spread himself in line and colour. Why not with words? Let him play at post-office projects in the entry-class and send "real" letters to his friends, both inside and outside school. For the 10 to 11 plus group, pen-friends in foreign lands, arranged through a regular correspondence bureau, can help enormously, not only in widening horizons and stimulating interest in Geography, but in providing a first-rate incentive for the young letter-writer. Perhaps a sand tray model, based on some local survey, is the great centre-of-interest at the moment. Why not "A short History of our Village," with chapters on its various aspects by different contributors? Or a class magazine, or a wall-newspaper . . . any theme, indeed, so long as it avoids the dreariness of the set composition. If the child's writing is to be pleasurable it can only be under one of two conditions : either it must be undertaken for some purpose that is evident to the writer, or it must be prompted by the desire to set down in words the novelty and force of his experience.

A word, also, about handwriting. That it is a disgrace is a criticism that is frequently levelled at the schools nowadays. Some people dismiss the fault as being of no great consequence; and certainly the disappearance of the copper-plate style of a generation ago is not to be lamented. The flowing hand that our fathers wrote so meticulously and with such loving-care bore testimony to the uniformity of their elementary education : it lacked character. To say this is not to condone the slipshod and untidy scribble that passes for penmanship today. Most of us write bad fists because we learned the technique the hard way—that is, as an

enforced task and not as a labour of love. And the upshot is that we excuse our inky unloveliness by saying that it does not matter. Maybe it is a small thing, but it is all part of a general decline in craftsmanship which may be symptomatic of a more serious decline in values, ethical as well as cultural. If that is so, the point is worth noting.

Writing is as much a practical skill as woodwork and therefore as amenable to the activity-approach. The pen is as much a tool as is the chisel. Let the use of it be learned informally, play-way fashion. Since most of the entry-class children in the Junior School will not be familiar with the handling of pen and ink, one way of beginning is to let them doodle with broad nibs (numbers 00, 0, 1 and so on), leaving free-pattern work to impose its own discipline. Once they have gained fluency in this, they may be given single- and two-letter line patterns, to be decorated in colour according to their fancy. In this way, writing becomes unconsciously an extension of drawing and painting. The great secret of this art-ful approach lies in its exploiting the child's inherent love of beauty. In its more advanced stages, lettering can become a craft in its own right. By these means and by degrees, much might be done to develop individual character in hand-writing and to restore pride and style in the lost art of calligraphy.

## READING.

In no department of primary education has the change-over from instructional teaching to a more informal approach been more remarkable than in the case of reading. Whereas formerly the child was set to work at his letters almost from his first day in school, there is now a growing disposition to wait until he evinces a spontaneous desire to read. A forcing policy, which took no account of his likes and dislikes, has gradually been abandoned in favour of one which prefers to "go slow," waiting upon the psychological moment. With play-way methods in the ascendant in most Infant's Schools it becomes increasingly apparent that the onus of teaching children how to read is one which will have to be taken over more or less entirely by the Junior School.

Can this duty be reconciled with the activity-principle, particularly as regards the entry-class? Most certainly it can. At the same time, it does seem that the revulsion from the collective-instruction idea can be carried too far and result in casuistical thinking. It is true, for example, that a late start may result in no great harm for the majority of children and may be positively beneficial for some—the experience of the war-years proved it again and again: but that is not to say that there is anything wrong with the time-honoured practice of beginning with the rudimentary techniques of reading *before* the learner shows any sign of wanting to make a start. After all, learning to read is not a habit that a pupil picks up haphazardly, any more than is learning to play the piano. Respect for the child's freedom and the refusal to impose anything upon it arbitrarily becomes merely futile when it fails to recognise necessities. No one pretends that there is anything wrong with compulsory school-attendance. The fact that we can take the horse to

the water but cannot make it drink does not release us from the duty of taking the horse to the water! If we left it to the children to decide whether or not they felt inclined to submit themselves to any form of educational training, the chances are that most of the schools would be empty. Why then should we have so many compunctions when it comes to the teaching of reading? Can we afford to await indefinitely for an urge that may be slow to reveal itself and which for all we know may never reveal itself at all? If every child came from a home in which the right kinds of stimuli were provided, we might: but millions do not. Therefore, no matter how convinced we may be of the rightness of *laissez faire* in other directions, we simply dare not leave the child to take his chances in so important a matter as learning to read.

Just what happens when a child first begins to decipher the printed page is a mystery which defies expert analysis. "Reading is an individual problem solved by each of us by himself, very little yet being known of how each child acquires it."<sup>1</sup> Since every child is so much a law unto himself, it follows that what he can and wants to do for himself is more effective than anything that the teacher can do for him. Ergo the argument for abandoning collective-class methods of teaching is nowhere more unanswerable than in the case of reading. While it is unsafe to advocate any single method it is clear that the first step must be to lure the child into the position of wanting to read without making him over-anxious about it, and to make it obvious that he will be missing half the fun of the game until he is able. No self-respecting junior will rest content if he sees others happily absorbed in books while he himself is left out of it. At all stages he should be surrounded with an attractive and varied display of reading material. A well stocked book-

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(1) N. Catty: *Learning and Teaching in the Junior School*, 52.

corner rather than a graded reader is what is needed in most class-rooms. Without mentioning publishers, the standard of production in children's literature for all ages is probably as high today as ever it was: and if the supply of picture books for the non-readers is scanty, there is no reason why it should not be supplemented by comics, wretched as most of them may seem to us.

It is obvious that the activity-approach has a vitally important part to play in the pre-reading stage. Sticking on labels, card-games, looking at pictures and finding the appropriate names, apparatus work—there is no end to the devices which ingenuity can contrive in order to exploit the young learner's ingenuousness. The first objective must be to familiarise him with the handling of books and to instil in him the confidence that reading is "something that he can do." Much can be done, too, by reading aloud, for all children eager for stories: "indeed, half the battle is over when a child comes and asks to be read to, for then at last he has discovered that books are interesting."<sup>2</sup>

Once the pupil is over the first ditch he may be allowed to make his own progress and browse at will; but it should be borne in mind that it is not every child that can overcome the initial difficulties of the reading process without a struggle. Until he is able to go ahead on his own account, the learner must inevitably be in the hands of the teacher in one way or another; and to pretend that his activities in learning to read are "free" in any sense of the word is the hollowest of mockeries. They must be directed and controlled, even if it means compelling him to tasks that he finds uncongenial. Few of us relished being taught to play the piano under pain of having our knuckles rapped and yet, looking back, we realise that it was good for us. Not that we are so reactionary as to suggest that there is any virtue in being brought

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(2) N. Catty, op. cit. 51.

to these things the hard way. By all means let us avoid creating a sense of difficulty in the would-be reader; but let us not delude ourselves by supposing that he will invariably take to and apply himself to the reading habit without a modicum of persuasion or gentle prodding. Not infrequently one finds a quite intelligent boy or girl who for one reason or another cannot make head-or-tail of the simplest page by the time they reach the secondary stage. To say that their lack of attainment is temporary and that they will be none the worse for it in the end is a cynicism which cannot conceal the fact that they are sadly deprived. Reading is just as much a means to the good life in childhood as it is in later years.

Thanks to the science of educational research, there is no lack of introductory readers calculated to promote confidence in beginners; and in the great majority of cases no particular difficulty should be experienced. The group-system, now prevalent in most Junior Schools has proved invaluable in allowing the slow and backward types to receive assistance from the more advanced. Both profit in their different ways, the helper and the helped. There is something to be said, too, for having children of different age-groups together for reading periods. A 10-year-old who is otherwise abreast of the work in his class may transfer to a lower class for this purpose without necessarily feeling any inferiority-complex. As an alternative to streaming this kind of cross-classification according to ability in Reading (and in Arithmetic) is as far as the Junior School will usually need to go. The rare "problem cases" will certainly require some measure of individual treatment: there will always be the few who fail to respond until they feel that a personal interest is being taken in their problems. If the latter are genuine and not just attributable to laziness or indifference, these slowcoaches should on no account be made conscious

of them as a fault. The best way of bringing them on is to get them completely relaxed, to get rid of the tensions and complexes which have caused a seize-up in their progress, probably in the pre-reading stage. It is no use hammering away at "look and say" or phonic method : to do so is to take hold of the wrong end of the stick, and only exacerbates the learner's difficulties. Far better for their peace of mind (and the teacher's patience !) to take them aside and let them play around at their ease with tempting books. The out-and-out incompetents ought to be diagnosed as soon as possible, certainly not later than 8 plus, so that if necessary they can be transferred to special schools.

Once the simple technicalities are mastered, it is evident that a curriculum based on an all-round scheme of activities will find uses for reading in all sorts of connections. Indeed, one of the most positive claims that can be advanced in favour of the new approach is precisely this : that it transforms reading from an abstract exercise into a purposeful occupation. Right from the start, the child is in the habit of resorting to books, not only for the pleasure that can be got out of them, but because they contain the answers to his questions. He reads not so much because he is told to, or even because he wants to, as because he feels that he must.

Accordingly each classroom in the Junior School should have readily available a liberal display of reading material arranged under the headings of (a) *Practical Information* (instructions on how to make, where to find things, how they work and what they are for etc.), (b) *General Interest* (simple works of reference for Nature Study, History, Travel, etc.); (c) *Fiction* (from fairytales to adventure stories). If the order of preference looks to be a little surprising, it is none the less one which is decided by the interests of the children themselves. Too often our choice of what goes into the Junior School library is falsified by

adult ideas of suitability and preconceived notions of what constitutes a "children's classic." No doubt for the tiny tots in the entry-class the teacher must do the choosing; but for the older children there can be no more valuable centre-of-interest than the building up of a class-room or school library in which they have an active say. Let them visit the local bookshops—or where that is not possible, consult the publishers' lists, and make their own selection, under the teacher's supervision. Let them work out the costs and study the economy of purchasing. Let them appoint their own committee and make their own rules of membership. Let them see how a public library is run and arrange their own in the light of it. Let the collection be housed in a "quiet room" where silence is the golden rule, a place wherein they are free to come and go as they please so long as they observe a suitable decorum.

What it amounts to is that the Junior School must set itself a higher aim than that of teaching reading simply as a basic skill (that is, as a preparation for more academic studies in the secondary stage); it must develop the skill for its own ends. In no activity is the need for purpose more pronounced than it is in reading. Only if at 11 plus the junior is confirmed in the habit of referring to books in order to satisfy his endless curiosity, as well as being able to lose himself in the land of imaginative story, can we be sure that primary education has succeeded in one of its most important aims.

## ART AND DESIGN.

On the principle that it is wise to leave well alone, and because there is no lack of expert advice on the subject, it seems better to refrain from saying very much about art-teaching in the Junior School. But this much needs to be said, that the revolution in methods which has taken place during recent years has produced a transformation which could hardly have been deemed possible by those who, not so very long ago, were brought up in the elementary school. The same people who were once taught object-drawing by rule-of-thumb (cobwebbed cube and cone or slavish copy of blackboard diagram) now flock to public exhibitions and stand in awe before the latest examples of child-art. Drawings and paintings which only a decade ago would have been considered too hopelessly "incorrect" to merit a second glance are now studied with the utmost gravity, as critically appraised almost as if they came from the studio of a Picasso or a Matisse. And rightly so, for the developments of modern art in the schools have been, and are, as significant and as astonishing as those in the Schools.

What is the secret of this new departure in education? It can best be expressed paradoxically, by saying that the teaching of art has improved out of all knowledge simply because art is no longer taught at all. Instead of beginning with techniques, with rules of perspective and the like, the teacher of insight now recognises that the canons of child-art are peculiar to the individual child: he recognises, also that what the child has to express is not only more vital, but more important, than anything that can be impressed upon him. The teacher's first duty is to see that the young artist is so familiarised with the handling of brush or pencil that he can interpret himself fluently in the chosen medium: and

afterwards to leave him to it. "Art is not an effort of will but a gift of grace—to the child at least, the simplest and most natural thing in the world. Whenever people are sincere and free, art can spring up . . . That is why the child's happiness or otherwise in the presence of the teacher is all important, and why the school of to-day is, or should be, the perfect setting for children's art. It is not too much to say that unless relationship amounting to love exists between teacher and children, children's art, as it is now understood, is impossible." What else are these often-quoted words of Marion Richardson but the epitome of the activity-principle itself?

All art is a creating, whether it be the shaping of words into a poem ("poesis") or the moulding of clay into a vase; and the conviction that all activity is, or can become, creative, has inspired philosophers from Plato to Herbert Read to champion the thesis that art should be the basis of education. The difficulty is to know how to ensure that the activity is indeed creative. In itself, "free-expression" explains nothing. To say, as we have done, that child-art gains by not being taught is more and less than the whole truth, which is that the desired effect can only be brought about by "disciplined activity in which the teacher's own imaginative gifts play a very important part." To call it free-expression and leave it at that is altogether inadequate: we must at all stages seek to know why the child is impelled to externalise the moods and feelings suggested by his inner life. If we understand his drawings aright, we shall see in them a steadily growing purpose, a purpose that evolves from the all-but accidental scribble of the pre-school infant through the graphic symbolisms of early childhood to the descriptive realism of the pre-adolescent.

In no sphere of the Junior School curriculum is the range of difference between the work of the 7-year-olds and

11-year-olds more evident than it is in Art. The drawings of the entry-class are not intended as strict likenesses and should not be judged as such: those of the "secondary leavers" are considerably less subjective and tend to be increasingly factual. But in either case the purpose behind them is the same: the children intend them "not as the expression of their perceptual images nor of their pent-up feelings, but rather as a "feeler", a spontaneous reaching-out to the external world, at first tentative, but capable of becoming the main factor in the adjustment of the individual to society . . . The process of adjustment is always one of 'Einfühlungskraft', of creative imagination, and it is for this very practical reason that we maintain that art is the basis of any efficient technique of education."<sup>1</sup> Or, as the Scottish Report on Primary Education prefers to put it: "Teachers should bear in mind that the child has two worlds, both of which are real—the world of external experience and the inner world of image and fantasy. Both of these worlds are constantly changing and developing. Painting gives him a medium for expressing at each stage his relation to these changing worlds."<sup>2</sup>

Art for art's sake, then, has no place in the Junior School. However closely the child's naive use of line and colour approximates to our ideas of a finished masterpiece, the resemblance is entirely fortuitous. The child, as we have already said, is a *kinæsthete* *not* an *aesthete*: he is an artefact, *not* an artist. To recognise these limitations is not in the least to belittle him, only to see him in a proper perspective. No good can come of reading more into child-art than is really there and as much harm is likely to result from making false pretensions for "free-expression" as ever resulted from shackling that expression with a set of rules.

(1) Herbert Read: *op. cit.* 164-165.

(2) *Para. 161, p. 40.*

Two main phases of development in drawing and painting are distinguishable in the 4 year period embraced by the Junior School; and if it is to be appropriate to the children's development the work in art must recognize them, not seeking to improve upon nor go beyond them. If it does, the result will be artifice : it will certainly not be child-art.

In the first phase which roughly covers the 7 to 8 age-groups, the drawings may still show traces of the crude symbolic schema of infancy : only now they are more concerned to be representational and realistic. "Items, however, are suggested more by the association of ideas than by the analysis of percepts. Profile views of the face are attempted, but perspective, opacity, foreshortening, and all the consequences of singleness of viewpoint are still disregarded. There is a gathering interest in decorative details."<sup>3</sup> In the second phase the approach to objective realism is more pronounced. Far from being content with drawing from memory and imagination, the 9 and 10 year-old child now wants to represent nature at first hand. He wants his drawing to "look like" the real thing. He is no longer satisfied with mere outline, but must needs start shading to produce a three-dimensional effect. Getting the perspective right begins to exercise him not a little; and as a consequence his work loses some of that quality of unforced grace which once lent it a peculiar appeal. This loss, being inevitable in the junior's development, is not to be regretted. As in the use of the written word the aim is not literary composition, so in drawing and painting there is no question of aspiring to works of art. There should be nothing precocious about child-art, nor any pretence that it is better or worse than it need be. What we are looking for in it and from it is fundamentally the same benefit as is conferred by every activity which involves the outward expression of an inner motive.

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(3) Herbert Read: *op. cit.* 118.

No one supposes that because juniors are encouraged in the use of hammer and chisel that they are therefore being trained as carpenters, nor that because they love "playing at houses" and making dens they are all cut out for the building trade. Why, then, should art be considered as a case apart? For the child it represents what is essentially a practical business. If the 10-year-old asks for tracing paper, wants to use his ruler for straight lines, to copy from book illustrations and find his subject matter in object-drawing rather than in memory and imagination, it is hard to see why he should be restrained. The issue is not one which can be decided by æsthetic considerations. The temporary decline in sensibility may be more apparent than real: and in any case the over-all function of art in the Junior School is identical with that of every other form of activity—to produce little people, not artistic types.

There is one branch of artistic endeavour in which the schools have generally failed to exploit the latent talents of children—the plastic. Since the tactile sense is most refined during the period of childhood, it seems that a tremendous opportunity has been missed in not following-up more seriously the plasticene play that is so marked a feature of life in the Infants' School. What is there indulged in as a recreative pastime might well develop into a more serious pursuit if only teachers acknowledged that in art, as in all other aspects of the junior curriculum, the three-dimensional is to be preferred. The fact that, at 9 years old, most children tend to consider plasticene too babyish a material does not imply that the uses of modelling are at an end. The probability is that their discontinuance is a reflection of an adult lack of interest: they are out of love with it because they are given to understand that there is no future in it. Of modern educationists, Montessori is only one among many who have given their support to the view that the

plastic-arts are better left alone in school, leading nowhere unless to dilettantism; and yet, seeing how strong is the appeal of whatever is tangible to juniors, one cannot help feeling that the view is mistaken. During the past two hundred years the native tradition of craftsmanship which filled our parish churches with glorious examples of carving in wood and stone has been submerged in the processes of mass-production industrialism. For the same reason, our failure to see life whole is largely due to our inability to see and feel it *in the round*. If it is nothing more, the satisfactions of modelling may provide a therapeutic that is sorely needed—at any rate by some children if not by all.

At present there is no saying whether or not modelling is likely to prove a popular activity for all children of this age. Doubtless the best work will always be done from individual choice, especially where it arises unasked for, as when the children discover a local clay-pit and bring their own materials. Alternatively, the teacher might purchase a supply of some of the proprietary brands and leave it lying around in the class room, leaving the rest to the natural propensities of the children. To be sure, he will need to supervise the early stages of the work while they are accustoming themselves to the limitations of the new medium. In all probability most of them will begin by attempting to model objects without a firm base or which otherwise do not lend themselves to plastic treatment—airplanes, ships, railway engines and such like. By trial and error, however, they will soon find out for themselves which models are really suitable and which are not. Once they have got into the way of thinking in terms of surface and mass, of moulding the shapeless lump into a creation of their own, they will turn out manufactures for a number of purposes. Some will be purely decorative—images of animals, prehistoric monsters, gargoyles, busts and figures. Some will be intended as

details for the sand-tray or group-work models—miniature houses, churches, railway platforms, etc.—or caricature heads for puppetry (in which case papier-maché is the likeliest material). Others again will be intended as make-believe utilities—vases, cups and saucers and all manner of vessels. In places these latter have been the means of starting up a flourishing pottery industry among juniors; but most schools will neither need nor desire to carry modelling to quite such professional lengths as this. For general purposes the children's rough-hewn products, shaped with home-made tools and according to their own untutored talent, will serve the turn.

What most commends art as an activity to the child is the absence of any feeling of difficulty. Here is something he can do, a language of line and colour and form in which he revels and in which he finds himself articulate even before he masters the intricacies of speech and written symbol. If the Junior School is to be a place wherein he really feels at home, its atmosphere one in which he "belongs," there is no more suitable internal decoration than a display of child-art. Better a slapdash mural done by the children themselves than a plain distempered wall that is hung with expensive reproductions. Every class-room should provide its own art gallery and have its own selection committee, with teacher and children deciding between them which examples deserve to be given a place of honour. Incidentally, more can be done to foster criticism and discernment in this way than by any number of conducted visits to the galleries.

In saying this, we are not ruling out the unconscious influence exerted (so it is hoped) by the silent example of great art wherever it can be seen. The travelling exhibitions arranged by the Arts Council have done something to bring the work of the Masters, modern as well as old, within the reach of many schools; and in doing so have supplied a long-

felt need. At best, however, they are a pleasing adjunct; and at most a drop in the ocean of visual education. Of all forms of communication, none is more direct, even for adults, than that which is apprehended by the eye. For children there is no more efficient vehicle of meaning than the picture. If the intuitive faculty is to be strengthened, sense and sensibility refined, then the medium for it must be artistic, not mechanical. In the past many claims have been advanced on behalf of "hand and eye training"; and while many of the arguments for manual work have been made good the miracle of the seeing eye has yet to be fully understood. This is a large subject which demands more than the bare mention that can be given it here, but one fact is inescapable. If the child's experience is to be enriched through sight, we must be on our guard against giving experience which is merely vicarious and which may be merititious. In a gadgeteer age it is more or less natural that we should be infatuated with "supplementary aids." To deny their uses would, of course, be futile; but to think that visual aids are the full and final answer to the problem of visual education is to mistake the part for the whole—and maybe the mirage for the solid reality.



## "LOOK HERE UPON THIS PICTURE AND ON THAT"

The three coloured reproductions overleaf are not included as superlative examples of child-art. Rather they are intended to illustrate a single point: the extraordinary range of development which takes place during the Primary School years. While it is true enough that the 7 to 11 years period is not clearly defined and that allowance must be made for an infinite variety of individual differences, it is also true that children in any age-group *do* exhibit certain common characteristics. These are nowhere better exemplified than in art-work.

Thus, at 5 plus, the typical infant may safely be described as self-centred, a non-social being, living in an inner world of his own, without much reference to objective reality. This is well shown in the first of these drawings, in which the solitary central figure (symbol of the *ego*) occupies most of the space and the outer world is represented by the sun and a few decorative flourishes. By contrast, the double-spread drawing of the ice-rink, done by a pupil in the last year of the Junior School, shows a remarkable advance. The whole conception has become far more outward-looking. The development of something like a social attitude, the intense interest in people and things and the general broadening of horizons, is obvious at a glance. The central figure is still there, but far from being all-important, it is now thought of as being only one among many. Far more care and attention are now paid to significant detail. Notice, for example, the varieties of costume and "hair-do", as compared with the five-year-old's disinterested schemas. The latter of course, cannot be judged as factual likenesses: the impression given (despite the action which the drawing depicts), is quite static. But how dynamic, crowded with activity and movement, is the second drawing!

Without trying to read into them more than is there, a further scrutiny of these plates reveals a number of clues to the characteristics of junior children as outlined in Chapter III, "The Case for Activity". At least they show that whatever happens between the stages of Infancy and Adolescence, far from being a colourless transition, is an exciting transformation.

## INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

*All three drawings are the work of children in a combined Infants'—Junior department of an industrial city school. In each case the media employed were charcoal and powder paints.*



DRAWING I. (opposite)  
" SOMEONE PLAYING A GAME "

*Child :*  
Girl, aged 5 years 11 months.

*Teacher's assessment :*  
I.Q. c. 120. Very bright, temperamentally as well as intellectually; good-average home background.

*Method :*

The subject was announced to the whole class and certain preliminary instructions given, e.g. "Be sure to make the figure as big as you can. Don't forget details. Has she a pretty dress on? What are the arms doing? Is there anything else you want to put in the picture, etc.?" Once the drawings were begun expression was left completely free.

*Comment :*

Typical of the infant's egocentricity. The triangular body, multi-fingered hands, etc., are symbolic. Except sporadically, detail does not matter; the child is so happily wrapped up in herself that she is not concerned with external appearances.

DRAWING II (centre spread)  
" THE ICE RINK "

*Child :*  
Girl, aged 10 years, 7 months.

*Teacher's assessment :*

I.Q. c. 120. Reliable, quiet, well-behaved, gets on well with others, good at school work, comes from a good home.

*Method :*

In this case the choice was left absolutely free, the only stipulation being that the drawing should contain figures. It was done in winter, at a time when playground "slides" were very much to the fore.

*Comment :*

Reveals the junior's rapidly increasing grasp of the unity-in-diversity of things and the relation of self to the community. Unconsciously, the composition reflects the wider circle of acquaintanceship with the world of people and affairs. Though still strongly coloured by personal feeling, it is the only one of the three drawings which approaches an objective outlook. Though traces of schematic drawing remain (e.g. the man's spectacles (left) which are still represented full circle), individual passages show signs of conscious creation (e.g. the swing of the red skirt).





### DRAWING III (opposite)

#### "LOOKING OUT OF THE FRONT WINDOW"

##### *Child:*

Boy, aged 8 years, 6 months.

##### *Teacher's assessment:*

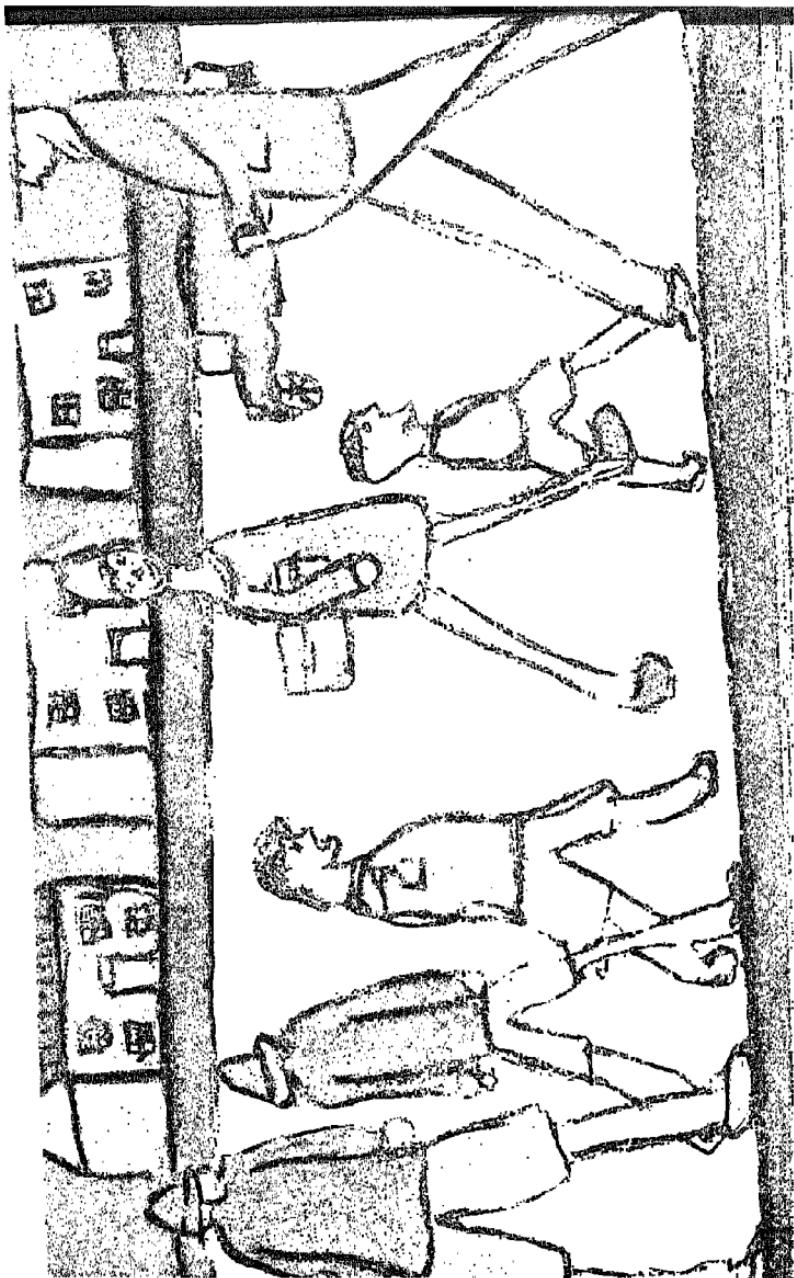
I.Q. 85-90. "C" type, backward. Mental age, estimated at 6 plus.

##### *Method:*

After asking the class to form their own mental images of an actual scene, various practical suggestions were made, e.g. "Don't try to draw the whole street. If there's more than one person in it, try to group them, etc."

##### *Comment:*

Still largely symbolic, but shows a more logical composition, greater detail and something of a social background. Profile heads are now attempted. The fact that the arms are missing in two of the figures and that there is a lack of liveliness about the whole (though there is admittedly some feeling for *movement*) may be attributable to the pupil's backwardness. There are exceptions to the rule, but generally speaking the junior child who is "good at art" is "good all round".





## CRAFT.

In the majority of schools Craft means "Handwork" as Art means "Drawing and Painting": and in a sense the two are not really distinguishable. If there is a difference it is that in Craft the underlying purpose is more obviously utilitarian; but as we have already affirmed that child's purpose in art is other than æsthetic—that he regards it as essentially a practical business—the distinction is admittedly a fine one. Handwork "may include anything done by hand, with tools in the hand, or with machines made and operated by the human hand. As it involves measurement and calculation, mathematics and arithmetic are its children and handmaidens. It includes all industries, many sciences and the arts of the painter, the sculptor, the architect and the musician. Handwriting, or the making of conventional signs by means of simple tools, is only one of the many divisions of handwork."<sup>1</sup>

"It includes all industries"; and since purposeful activity cannot but be industrious it follows that handwork will feature prominently in all branches of the Junior School's work. The need for it will suggest itself in all sorts of connections and so frequently that it will be wiser not to treat it as a separate activity and not to attempt any confinement of it to prearranged time limits.

If Handwork has failed to engage the full enthusiasm of juniors in the past it is because, in being set apart and taught so to speak, *ad hoc*, it has not been geared to the curriculum as a whole. Often, as a result, it has degenerated into a formal, half-hearted exercise, with instructions that have to be followed to the letter, with no better motives than those

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(1) Primary Education: Report of the Advisory Council on Education in Scotland, para. 115, p. 30.

of make-belief to sustain it. The children have cut out and folded and gummed their little manufactures to order, but at the end of it all *à quoi bon?* They were conscious all along that this was not a *real* job that they were engaged upon, that all the care and neatness lavished upon it was (in their eyes) so much wasted effort.

Since time, materials and suitable accommodation are usually so inadequate, and since the tendency to regard Handwork as extra to the main business is still prevalent, it is understandable that the emphasis should be upon the formal aspect and the giving of particular skills. If Craft is to enter into its own as a Junior School activity, however, it can only be on the basis of a more generous evaluation of its educational possibilities : it must be Craft in the sense of 'Einbildungskraft'—not Craft as the trade apprentice understands it. The qualities which we hope to cultivate by it are more subtle and significant than those involved in mere manipulation; they are qualities of character and make-up which we can ill afford to neglect. To quote once more from the Scottish Report : " It is more than ever important that our education should be three-dimensional. Our civilization depends not alone on abstract reasoning but on the understanding and use that is to be made of the discoveries and inventions that press upon us with such terrifying rapidity. While it would be very rash indeed for anybody to make detailed prophecies about the next fifty years, we should at least be safe in forecasting that these years will be a dynamic rather than a static period of our history. People will have to be more adaptable, more mobile, more ingenuous, more ready to meet novel situations and more ready to master a variety of techniques and processes. Dexterity of hand and nimbleness of mind will be more in demand than dull mechanical labour. Our children must therefore be taught the handling and experience of tools, machines

and materials to give them a chance of understanding their uses and qualities, and their potentialities for the advancement or destruction of civilized life. The amount of this that can be done in a primary school must be limited of course by time and stage of advancement, but not *necessarily by standard adult conceptions of what is suitable and possible.*<sup>2</sup>

It is because the creative impulses of the 7 to 11 years' period are so dynamic, because children of this age are ready to turn-to and apply themselves to every kind of practical occupation within their reach that Craft deserves a place of priority in the curriculum. But because juniors are so pre-eminently practical-minded, the purposes of Craft must be linked with genuine usefulness, at any rate as often as possible. It is true that there is a place for precise instruction, and that neatness and accuracy are not to be despised. There are times when juniors like to be shown how to do things properly—it gives them a sense of achievement if the finished article is perfect to the last detail; and there are times when they need to be made to observe due care in carrying out the work in hand. For themselves, they have no time, so to speak, for finesse and precious little for craftsmanship as such. Their own free-time manufactures are apt to be somewhat botched. "T'will serve" is their motto. Every allowance should be made for this easy acceptance of what is rough and ready, nor should it ever be confused with the later attitude which is content with slipshod, shoddy work if only it can be made to pass muster. The junior's haste to get on with the job, not bothering unduly about details, is part of his impetuous nature. To peg him down to a piece of work for a week or more, merely for the sake of meticulousness in the performance, is to

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(2) Para. 127, pp. 33-34.

impose a restraint that is not always necessary and which may be the means of killing his verve. Paper and cardboard may be satisfactory enough for the self-made toys of the younger child, always provided that he can take them home and call them his own, but they are not the sort of materials to convince the 9 or 10-year-old who is looking for some serviceable result. Above all, the budding artisan wishes to see his handiwork put to an immediate use, preferably his own use. This is why some of the best craft-work in the Junior School is likely to be that which is necessitated by other activities—the making of mats for indoor P.T., or aprons for clay-modelling, the building of hutches for pets, bird-tables and nesting boxes for Nature Study, accessories for the school garden, picture frames for classroom art-shows, or the manufacture of "props" for a full-dress dramatic performance. The list might be extended indefinitely.

At least so far as craft in the lower half of the school is concerned there is no point in discriminating between the sexes. Even at 11 plus boys can be happy enough with needle and thread provided they can see an immediate need in what they do. As for Needlework with a capital N, girls are not so very different from their brothers : they would rather stitch up hastily an item of dress that can be worn and called their own than devote weeks of painstaking effort to some frippery that will never be more than a showcase sample.

There are, too, many forms of manual activity which might usefully be engaged in but which are not normally reckoned worthy of the name of Craft; mending a puncture, baking a cake, lighting a fire (both in and out of doors) digging and planting the garden, repairing a broken toy or finding out how a ball-and-cock system works, to mention only a few. Odd jobs of this kind, humdrum as they appear, are a delight to juniors and may be the means of

opening up a wide range of interests in the world of science. How many wives are incompetent at housecraft and how many husbands are helpless when it comes to fitting a tap washer simply because their aptitude in these matters was never set to work at the proper time? Anyone who has seen a youngster take a clock to pieces (construction in reverse!) will recognise that the attraction of the common-or-garden amounts to nothing less than a passion.

It is no use protesting that lack of equipment prevents the schools' carrying out suggestions of this kind. Very often, the best work is that which is done with materials brought from the home. Someone fetches an orange-box, say, rigging it up as a hand-loom—and before long (emulation being what it is) half the class will be busily weaving. Or a boy brings the parts of a toy aeroplane which have to be fitted together—and hey presto! a model-aeroplane club has established itself. As Decroly was the first to point out, improvisation is the key-note of success in most Junior School activities. Indeed, one suspects that virtue is gone out of it as soon as it becomes a question of adding final touches and polish to the work. The place for laboratories and special woodwork departments is not in the Junior School. What is wanted, rather, is a comprehensive building-unit which will serve equally well as studio, workshop, club, theatre, sorting-house and classroom combined. If there are no benches and not enough tools to go round, why then, the most expedient thing is to make-do with desks, and let the children provide their own hammers and saws: they love nothing better than to feel that they are tackling a man-size job on something like their own terms. In the long run it may be to the school's advantage that mother's knitting pins and needles have to be loaned out and father's brace-and-bit borrowed for the occasion—and the bits and pieces of wood that are acquired by the children can be far

more precious than any that are to be had on the teacher's requisition.

The trouble about formal handwork is that it tends to be so finicky! The "free-expression" motive is held in abeyance for fear of making mistakes: it is so taken up with watching its step as to be more or less stultified. Any-one who has watched them dismantling derelict cars or building a den in a Junk Playground must have realized how much more vital is the constructive impulse in juniors when it is allowed free play. A piece of waste ground littered with bricks and planks, with a spade or two lying around, is seized on and quickly converted to the most extraordinary purposes. It may be that one of the reasons for providing such playgrounds is to find an answer to the problem of overcrowding in the large towns, to avert possible delinquency and maladjustment; but the principle behind them has a more universal application. Every child, whether born into a world of congested slum or rural Arcady, needs experience of making things in his own way, without any assistance other than that which he gains from his fellows. If only Craft could drop its pretences and refrain a little from its insistence on the finer points it might be less stoogy than it is. "More matter with less art" might well be its policy for the future. If this activity were to be pursued more on the free-and-easy lines of the Junk Playground and less as an introduction to specific skills, its appeal to the junior's constructive abilities would be more compelling than it usually tends to be.

If this sounds wild and whirling advice, the excuse must be that the need for a wider and deeper interpretation of the place of Craft in the curriculum is urgent. Because they are so closely related to practical interests, "hand and eye" activities are singularly appropriate to the proper business of the Junior School. But if the most is to be made of them,

the teacher will do well to remember that the hero-worship of children at this stage is no longer addressed to Peter Pan but to that most immortal of odd-job men, Robinson Crusoe.

## MUSIC AND MUSIC-MAKING (with a Note on Listening)

Whether or not music be the food of love, it is certainly intended for delight: and there is no more persuasive educator of the emotions. Its appeal is direct, a communication which can be understood—to some extent at least—irrespective of techniques. Is it not therefore slightly ironic that of all activities music and music-making should be the very ones which demand the giving of a technique, which cannot well be indulged in without the teacher's assistance? If methods of teaching, and the place awarded to music in the Junior School curriculum, are unsatisfactory it is because the relationship between "theory" and "practice" has been wrong. In giving the technique we have marred the delight.

Purely for the sake of enjoyment, and as a background to imaginative activities of all kinds, we can hardly have too much music in the Junior School. The fact that the majority of children are not capable of what is normally understood as "appreciative listening" until they have passed the age of 10 does not mean that juniors should be unacquainted with great music. Their inability to arrive at an intellectual understanding of its full meaning and finer points is not such a disqualification as it is sometimes thought to be. However unconsciously exerted, the influence of good music in setting the tone and in providing the appropriate stimulus for poetry, drama and dance (maybe, at times for art-work also), cannot be exaggerated.

It will be asked who decides what is "great" and "good" in music for juniors. Beethoven symphony and Bach chorale? — or is the choice to be limited to works specially written for children by recognised composers? The answer

can only be that until the children have been given opportunities of choosing for themselves, there is no saying for certain—but the indications are that the range of suitability is far wider than is usually supposed. It is a hard thing to say, but the sensibilities of many children may be finer than those of many teachers! Because of its peculiar nature, music tends to cut across the normal intelligence groupings—which is one reason why it is so difficult to assign attainment standards to any particular age-range. The duffer at Arithmetic may be a musical genius for all we know : and Prokofiev may score a *succès fou* with an audience of 8-year-olds and fall on deaf ears in the Sixth Form. On the whole then, it is better to preserve an open mind on this question of the choice of music-to-be-heard in the Junior School. The impact of all but the most "difficult" and "abstract" forms of music on the child's imagination is so cryptic in its effects that it is not even safe to deduce very much from his likes and dislikes. Generally speaking, he prefers music with a strongly marked rhythm (something that sets his feet a-tapping)—music with an easily recognised melody (a tune he can hum to)—music romantic in mood—or, best of all, music "with a story." But supposing that he has not been told the story then he is just as likely to vote for "Jardins sous la pluie" as he is for "William Tell" or "The Sorcerer's Apprentice."

It has to be recognised that concentrated listening to music is an activity that the junior cannot abide for more than a minute or two at a time : for the rest he must needs be strumming with his fingers or beating time or singing *sotto voce*. He must be *doing*. Listening may be an activity in itself and one which needs to be cultivated, but it is an art which should be learned incidentally. The time and place for it in the Junior School is not in a formal music-appreciation lesson. To expect the child to focus his attention on

the music to the exclusion of everything else is to deny his nature, seeing how incapable he is of isolating one sense from another. There is indeed a hypnosis of the ear as powerful as that of the eye (which the cinema exploits), but it is to be doubted whether its hold on the imagination is developed quite so early. Properly employed, the wireless set may introduce the child to a world of experience that might not otherwise be open to him, but here it is the appeal of the disembodied voice and the use of significant sound that we are thinking of, rather than music alone. In so far as a purely musical experience is the aim, the best music-listening for juniors is that which involves, or in some way permits of, active participation. Since opportunities for the latter are apt to be limited, there is something to be said for associating music with other activities in the school's programme, letting it steal upon the hearer unbeknown, lapping him, like the young Milton, "in soft Lydian airs."

On the face of it, this may sound very much like the encouragement—or at any rate a condoning—of background-listening, a vice to which nearly everyone is addicted nowadays. If so, a false impression has been given, one which straightway needs correction. We are well aware that one of the Junior School's duties is to train children to listen, and that listening as opposed to mere hearing, is a faculty which demands effort. It is only fair to remember, however, that we listen for a variety of reasons, in order to carry out instructions, to gain information or new ideas, to mention only a few. By all means let us see to it that juniors acquire the habit of paying close attention for practical purposes of this kind. But there is another kind of listening which is more qualitative than these and which cannot be assured by any direct method of training or word-of-mouth. Listening to music belongs to this category : and it is because we think that there is something slightly cold-blooded in asking child-

ren of this age to listen to music in isolation, as it were, that the recommendation in the previous paragraph is made. The surest way to spoil their enjoyment and to foster a permanent dislike of music is to force them to listen.

If this explanation of the reasons for thinking that music should be used as an interfusion in other activities is considered unsatisfactory, there is the further excuse that, so far, the main problem of music teaching in the Junior School has not been broached. We have been looking at it from the side of "experience" so to speak rather than of "activity." Quite obviously, the main emphasis must be upon music-making—which in nine cases out of ten means class-singing, with a modicum of theory thrown in for good value. And what a dreary, soulless business it can be! It is true that in the best teaching today the indispensable aim is enjoyment and that the one-time daily sight-reading exercises (oh, that dreadful *Modulator*!) are gradually giving way to a less formal treatment which is content to allow theory to wait upon practice. One cannot help wondering, nevertheless, how often the singing impulse is stifled at birth by chronic *sol-fah*.

To say that music is *sui generis* and requires specialist qualifications in the teacher is surely a defeatist argument. It is commonly held, for instance, that good singing presupposes a certain standard of pianistic skill in the teacher. This is nonsense: as well say that the human voice must forever be tied to a Jew's harp. Singing is the gift of joy and the more unaffectedly it can be indulged in the better—which is only one reason for thinking that it should not be taken at fixed times but as and when the mood occasions, preferably unaccompanied. Dance, movement, mime and drama may at any time be enhanced by spontaneous song.

Supposing that the teacher is a complete musical ignoramus (and many are), what then? If he is tone-deaf and

constitutionally incapable, there is no helping him, poor fellow, short of taking music out of his hands altogether. If he cannot help himself, that is, if he is able but unwilling to remedy the flaw (even if only to the extent of being one jump ahead of his pupils), he may do more damage than good in continuing to teach a subject in which he feels no real interest. Bluntly, if music fails to excite him and if he is not prepared to study the rudiments of its technique, let him leave it alone for no one will see through the pretences of his teaching sooner than the children. If, on the other hand, he admits frankly how little he knows but shows that he is ready to learn, all may be well: indeed, some of the best music-teaching in Junior Schools occurs in just this kind of situation.

Without some grasp of rudiments, unfortunately, the most enthusiastic efforts must fall short of completeness, for the great failing of learning to sing by ear is that it leads nowhere. The child must know the meaning of pitch, time, note-values and so forth, if he is to have a foundation for any sort of musical education: and if they are to be learned at all these technical items must be taught. In this respect Music is like the three R's.—it demands instruction and direction from the teacher. Apart from a few singing games there are not many musical activities which youngsters can engage in entirely off their own bats. The Infants' School's liking for the percussion band has been largely due to the desire to find a solution to this problem of reconciling the formal and informal aspects of music-teaching. But even in the most skilfully conducted percussion band the element of regimentation is never entirely absent. How could it be? Whichever way one looks at it, one is forced to the conclusion that music is a game which cannot be played profitably unless the rules are observed—and that among other things it calls for effort and self-subordination. The piccolo player,

counting a 32 bars rest before making his tiny contribution to the fortissimo of the full orchestra, has been trained in more than the use of his instrument. Without making it too much of an endurance-test, it seems that the junior music-maker must undergo a similar discipline and that in trying to make things easy for him we are not only rendering him a disservice but asking the impossible. It may be that in time to come ways and means may be found for granting the same kind of freedom in musical activities as has regenerated the work in art. At present it has to be acknowledged that the ways are few and far from obvious, and the teacher's function as Director of Music is (and is likely to remain) of paramount importance.

One way of bringing practical activities to bear on the problem is through the manufacture of bamboo pipes, undertaken as a sideline in Craft. The idea is that the children experiment in spacing and boring the various holes so as to discover just how the sounds are produced and eventually to build up the full range of notes for themselves. Unfortunately, to be of any value, the work demands a degree of accuracy which is beyond the scope of most juniors : it is certainly not the sort of job to be tackled without close supervision. Added to which, it is apt to prove a slow business, very trying for those children who are impatient to get on with learning to play an instrument. Where these difficulties can be overcome, however, a project of this kind, in which craft, music and science are combined in a single project, may be invaluable as a means of inculcating theory without tears.

Hitherto the common excuse for inadequate music-teaching—or for not teaching it at all—has been that theory is the great stumbling-block : and it begins to appear that it will not pass muster much longer. Now that recorders are in increasing supply, many teachers are likely to find them-

selves having to learn with the children, starting from scratch. Some may think this an unhappy position, not to say a predicament; but it is a shrewd guess that the standard of music-teaching will be transformed when a knowledge of theory is bred of practice and technique is wedded to æsthetic experience. If sets of recorders were dumped overnight on the doorsteps of every Junior School in the country, who can say what wonders might not be worked in the education of musical England?

## OUT AND ABOUT

(a) *To Plan or Not to Plan?*

There was a school-mistress of Never-mind-where who, under the impression that "Local Studies" were the thing, decided that she might as well keep abreast of a vogue that looked like becoming fashionable. Unfortunately as it proved, she went about it in much the same way as she would have chosen a new hat. It occurred to her that a centre-of-interest based on the G.P.O. might have possibilities in correlating the work in English, Geography, History, and other subjects—and that the pillar-box at the corner of High Street would make an excellent starting-point. There, at 11.15 precisely, she would assemble her class on Monday morning in order to have them observe the postman make the 11.20 collection. Having duly applied for, and received, the necessary permission, she marched the children *en crocodile* to the chosen spot, there to await events.

Alas for Miss Hopeful! It turned out to be a bitterly cold morning. The children, unused to this sudden release from the class-room, hardly knew what to make of it all. Not unnaturally, there was a good deal of idle chatter. After ten minutes' standing around a slight restiveness began to make itself felt. Miss Hopeful was all on edge: really, some of the children were *very naughty*. To make matters worse, the motley crowd had begun to attract a degree of attention from the passers-by that was positively embarrassing. 11.20 arrived but no postman. By 11.25 it had begun to snow. By half-past things were sadly out of hand and the teacher had grown uncomfortable in more senses than one. In the end there was nothing for it but to return to school and write off the morning's expedition as a total loss.

Subsequent inquiry elicited one curious piece of information: *the 11.20 collection had been discontinued* as from the previous Friday!

It is easy to scoff at such foolhardiness for its hazy purpose and patent lack of planning; but as a cautionary tale the anecdote is not without its point. It affords a perfect illustration of how *not* to begin. To begin with, the children had not been consulted: it was not they who had thought of the idea, nor had the exploration arisen necessarily out of their work in school. It was simply sprung upon them. Apart from the novelty of the jaunt, how could they be expected to evince an interest in something which had been put to them at a moment's notice and about which they were so completely in the dark? The failure of the projected activity was due not so much to the fact that it was imposed as to the omission of any attempt to win the children's co-operation. If the teacher had been honest about it—supposing, for example, that she had suggested the G.P.O. to them as a topic in which she herself was keenly interested and one, therefore, which they, too, might reasonably be expected to find interesting—the outcome might have been different. As it turned out, the only activity involved was that incurred in traipsing the streets. In effect, the class would have been far better employed doing formal Arithmetic.

For all that, one cannot help feeling certain sympathy for Miss Hopeful in her misadventure. At least she was willing to make a move, even if the steps she took were, shall we say, somewhat haphazard. The theory that the teacher ought to plan everything in advance, and have a clear-sighted view of the end to be reached, is one that needs to be contested. The activity-approach is far too adventurous to allow of it. In the case of trips to places of special interest—museums, art-galleries, factories, concert halls and

the like—it may be necessary to adopt a fixed itinerary and to see that the children are suitably primed beforehand; but where it is a question of any long-term scheme of out-of-door exploration the children are better left to make their own discoveries and, as far as possible, to follow their own leads. When that happens there can be no predicting what the course of events may be. It seems, then, that something of a Micawber element in the teacher's character may be quite a virtue. Anyone who has taken children on a nature walk will agree that the confidence that "something will turn up" is part of the game. Even the most ably planned scheme must be elastic enough to bargain for the unexpected.

While cut-and-dried planning is to be deprecated, there should at all times be an apparent purpose in environmental studies. If the exploration is to be worthwhile, the children must know not only *what* they are looking for, but *why*. That is why the most significant developments are often those which are suggested by the children themselves. "Sir, we seen 'em taking a dead horse in at the back of the ' Cock and Bull'—can we go and find out about it?" might at first blush seem an extraordinary request—yet it led to some profitable enquiries into a local industry that would otherwise have been overlooked. Similarly, on a trip to the canal, the chance remark "Johnny knows where there's plenty of clay—couldn't we fetch some?" was the means of starting up a new line in modelling.

Of course the young explorer is in need of assistance when it comes to discriminating between the important and the gratuitous elements of his experience; he cannot be expected to deduce meaning or theme from the heterogeneous mass of detail which accumulates from his observations. Juniors are not yet at the stage when they can distinguish the wood from the trees, though they are quick to sense the aimlessness of mere gad-abouting. It is for the teacher, therefore,

to make clear that there is an over-all purpose in the active investigation.

There is a world of difference between the teacher's helping children to draw conclusions from evidence which they have gained for themselves and the teacher's foisting his own conclusions upon them. The way to begin is not by explaining the over-all purpose and then adducing more immediate objectives which serve to illustrate it, but vice versa. Admittedly, the environment merely provides the local context for a wider application, without which it is valueless, but the local context must come first. The immediate objectives must be of the children's finding and choosing. Supposing, for example, that on their way to the pillar-box some chance occurrence had caught the attention of Miss Hopeful's party, it might conceivably have been the means of providing the point of departure for which she was hoping. In that case, the jaunt might not have been altogether a false start.

But can any self-respecting teacher put his trust in a policy which implies so many "ifs" and "mights"? In many areas the school's immediate environment offers little or no attraction in the way of field-work: and there may even be something in favour of the argument for taking the children as far away from it as possible. In country districts there will always be opportunities for nature-study in its proper setting; and the village itself is a sizeable unit for social studies, geographical surveys and local history. In most of our larger towns, on the other hand, the neighbourhood may consist of nothing better than acres of tenement-houses. Is it possible that those educationists who have urged the need for "activity and experience" outside the school precincts have been slightly doctrinaire? Is there not a danger that, in accepting their arguments, the teacher may be limiting himself and his children to a narrow, parochial

view, as well as to a sphere of action that looks to be as profitless as it is unlovely? If the school were situated in a genuine neighbourhood, *i.e.* "an area within the scope and interest of a pre-adolescent: such that daily life can have unity and significance for him as a representation of the larger social whole"<sup>1</sup>, all might be well. As it is, we dare not blink at the fact that this definition holds good more in the minds of the town-planners than as a present reality. Therefore it seems wiser to say that some of the claims which have been made for out-of-school activities remain not proven and that the importance assigned to them will vary from place to place, according to how the school finds itself situated.

Despite this, it remains true that no environment is quite worthless and that in the face of all difficulties, a great deal can be done to bring the occupations of the school more into touch with those of the workaday world. Indeed, if the school is to transform itself into a living community, it cannot ever afford to dissociate itself from its surroundings. The nature of the surveys to be undertaken will depend largely on the nature of the locality, though there are certain human needs which are common to all districts. A selection of these, classified under the headings "Place, Folk, Work", is provided in the Explorer Sheets issued by the Le Play Press. Excellent as these are in their way, it should never be forgotten that they are intended purely and simply as a guide and that ready-made paper schemes for out-door work are better avoided. An Explorer's Club in the Junior School should run itself; and, provided that its members know what they are about, run itself it will. Where they can see that their own interests are given pride of place, initiative and co-operation soon find employment for their restless inquisitiveness. The greatest disservice we can

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(1) L. Mumford: *The Culture of Cities*.

render the 9 to 11 plus age-groups is to over-organize them. Too often, we are at such pains to ensure that they do not go astray, that the whole spirit of investigation is lost and what should be an adventure becomes a dull alternative to classroom routines. Never forget the little girl who was found in tears in the playground before school. "It's our outing arternoon and I 'ates 'em", she moaned.

Enough said.

Without labouring the point, it is clear that the most delicate problem for the teacher who attempts any system of regular out-of-doors activities is to come to an arrangement which allows free-play to the infinite variety of children's interests without losing sight of an over-all educational purpose. Left to themselves, juniors are likely to get nowhere as a result of their forays. Yet, if the teacher shows them the way the charm is broken. It is the old, old story of knowing where and how to draw the line between "directed", "controlled" and "free" activities. So far as the school's environment is concerned, the only short answer is that contained in the Fröbelian phrase which speaks of "teacher and taught going out, striving together."

It appears that there is a tendency for Local Studies in the Junior School to be regarded as a starting point for more advanced Social Studies in the secondary stage, in much the same way as Nature Study used to be regarded as a preparation for Science. "Since the first stage in social awareness can arise in the child only from the impact of a community small enough to be physically and mentally comprehensible by him, social study must begin with the immediate neighbourhood and take the form of a local survey."<sup>2</sup> Agreed; but it should be made plain, first that what we are looking for in Local Studies is something more than an alternative

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(2) Secondary Education. Report of the Advisory Council on Education in Scotland (1946), chap. IX, para. 335.

method of broaching History, Geography or Civics; and secondly, that juniors are not likely to be much concerned with the intricacies of social pattern as such. The wider context is not for them as yet and no good can come of directing their interest prematurely to high-sounding themes based on "the product of the inter-action of place, folk and work." If Local Studies are not to be warped by adult criteria, they must be founded on the children's present interests, even though to our way of thinking these may often appear gratuitous. Whether it be the 7-year-old ego-centric or the 10-year-old "realist", the typical junior is primarily interested in *things*. It is the blacksmith's anvil and the flying sparks that excite him, not the man.

To particularise : the following account of what was done in a Junior School may be taken as an exemplary, indicative of a solution to the problem of arranging a course in Local Studies which is both acceptable and practical.

"Visits, some organized, others spontaneous, were paid to the local surveyor's office, reservoirs and pumping station, quarry, sewage-works, old Tudor Hall, two local factories, railway station and signal-box, two farms, police station, printing works, post office, parish church, a house in process of erection and a sawmill. The children were invariably well received. Moreover, a police inspector, a railway fireman and bus driver visited the school in their uniforms, talked to the children about the nature of their work and answered many questions.

These first-hand experiences were extended and supplemented by the use of books and encyclopædias which were avidly searched for further information. In fact, *one of the most successful features of the explorers' club was the way in which it promoted the use of non-fiction books in the school library and completely changed the children's attitude towards them.*

The groups became "specialists" in one aspect of the work, explored mainly in their own time, and gave to the whole class periodic reports and lecturettes which were usually followed by discussions and explanations. Thus the emphasis was placed on learning rather than on teaching, investigation rather than instruction, eager activity rather than passive receptivity. *It was interesting to observe in all the children the sense of satisfaction which arose from the knowledge that they were "specialists in something."* A daily need of success gave them self-confidence and created the right attitude of mind so necessary for the joyful pursuit of knowledge. Many new contacts were made in this way and *the general effect on the class as a whole was evidenced by their increased alertness, industry, initiative, resourcefulness and quality of work.* There was a marked improvement in self-control and habits of prolonged application to work. They eagerly undertook self-imposed tasks as a means towards a desired end. In a friendly atmosphere of co-operation and research, the children shared experiences with each other and absorbed the spirit of social living.<sup>13</sup>

The tonic effect which invariably results when the school takes itself out of doors has frequently been described by educational writers. Sceptics have only to read of the astonishing results which were obtained in the least promising of slum-districts simply by releasing children from their desks and turning them loose in such places as a blacksmith's forge or a fire station.<sup>4</sup> Far from regarding these as commonplace, the children were enchanted. The response was electrifying and the improvement in their attitude to school-work immediate. It was as though they had suddenly found themselves in an Aladdin's cave, as though they

(3) J. Spencer: "Social Studies in the Junior School" (Journal of Education, May, 1948). Italics mine.

(4) cf. C. I. Gons and C. Fletcher: Actuality in Education, *passim*.

had all the while been sleep-walking and wakened to the realization that the world was crowded with wonders.

There is a moral for us here if only we can see it. If it be true that juniors are little workmen looking for jobs to do and not always able to find them, it is equally true that they need introductions to the world about them. The world is their oyster and they are more than eager to rifle its contents; only there are so many "Keep out: Adults only" signs about that their eagerness too often becomes inhibited. They have also a strange facility for living in an environment without being aware of it. Having eyes, they see not. Their curiosity, active as it is, needs a helping hand to direct it. Their hunger for first-hand experience is consuming, yet when it comes to satisfying it they are apt to be quite pitifully helpless. Let no one, then, suppose that because their out-of-school time is spent in playing about the bomb-site or the factory yard there is no need to show them around their own little world during school hours. Under the teacher's wing, many doors that would otherwise be locked and barred to them can be opened.

"The teacher who knows the meaning of all this does what he can to get OUT. Pestalozzi was not long in finding his way into the woods with his little flock. Salzmann and other German teachers took to the roads with their scholars. Bartholomai organized regular school journeys in the streets of Berlin . . . "

But in this country it has always been a failing among teachers to believe in the possibility of bringing the mountain to Mahomet. As far back as the beginning of the 19th century Robert Owen urged that young children should be taught "not through books but by observation of common things and natural objects brought in from field and

garden"; and in 1831, as if to anticipate the 1931 Report's recommendation that the Junior School should "introduce its pupils to experience in an orderly and intelligent manner", we find Dr. Mayo proposing "to bring education more into contact with the child's own experience." Yet somehow the profession never got beyond the stage of being a pious intention. In practice it boiled down to that saddest of fiascos, the Object Lesson—or, at best, the primness of the School Visit. The hoary sanctity invested in the classroom was so great that any release from it was hardly to be entertained, with the result that environmental studies remained tied to the desks. Though sporadically, and always under sufferance, they led a lingering existence as Local Geography or Local History, they were nowhere conceived as being integral to the curriculum. For years the theory was that by focussing the children's attention on specific objects a general faculty of observation might be fostered, but nowadays even this much virtue cannot be allowed. We need be under no further illusions about a hypothetical "transfer of training": we are free to believe that observation is required, not as an end in itself, but as a phase in the life-process. What we are aiming at in out-of-school studies is not to produce budding naturalists or sociologists, but young people. It does not much matter that the environment of one school is totally different from another's: what is important is the new intimacy in group-and-teacher relationships, the stimulus of purposeful exploration, and above all, the putting to good use of personal observation.

Put crudely, the benefits of out-and-abouting may be compared with those experienced by an invalid whom a long illness has kept indoors. The sortie itself may be uncomfortable, and maybe wind and rain are not exactly what the doctor ordered, yet how much better he feels afterwards for his dose of fresh air! In the same way the Junior School

can receive a new impetus and lease of life by turning its back at times on a too-sheltered existence.

The assertion that the precise nature of the exploration is immaterial may at first sight seem rash. Unless, however, the children's experience is properly absorbed it cannot serve as the raw material on which emotional and intellectual development may feed. In any case, juniors are naturally observant: there is no question of coaxing them into being inquisitive about their surroundings. The problem is to catch their dynamic interest in actualities and apply it to their work in school. Unless observation leads to Association (talking, thinking, arranging) and subsequently to some form of Experience (doing, making), it is likely to prove a dead-end.

If we look up the index of Darwin's "Descent of Man", we shall find such entries as

"Dirt on feet of birds  
Cat's tail curling when going to spring  
Blackbird, colour of beak."

Could anything be more trivial? Yet it was because observations of this kind, apparently meaningless in themselves, were sorted and systematised that an entirely new direction was given to human thought. At a lower level, but in much the same way, the junior's eye for significant detail needs to be trained so that eventually he learns to "see into the life of things."

Consider, for a moment, this extract from a youngster's nature diary, written after a winter's day expedition to the marshes:

#### "SNIPES."

You can tell which are which because the Jacksnipe is the smallest of them. The Jacksnipe has a shorter bill also. You can tell also because the Commonsnipe when someone is coming it will fly away but the Jacksnipe

relies on its camouflage and it will fly up when you are nearly on top of him. The Jacksnipe does not make a noise."

Is it a cause for congratulation that this boy has identified correctly a comparatively rare bird? Does it much matter that he can discriminate between two species that are as near as two pins alike? It does not: but the fact that he shows signs of shrewd discernment, that he is beginning to see the point of accurate observation and of checking it in the textbook, that his ungrammatical record is accompanied by a neat sketch, that he is so full of the experience that he has come hustling back to the classroom to set it down on paper, that after school he and his cronies will be off to the marsh again—all this matters a great deal.

Sir Percy Nunn once made the just and penetrating observation that no experiment in education was ever justifiable unless it was entered upon "as an adventure in life believed to be well inspired." There are undoubtedly many cautious and serious-minded teachers who are deterred from shifting the school's *mise en scène* outside the four walls of the classroom because they are not convinced of the necessity of such a venture. They have heard all the arguments about the school's being housebound and still cannot bring themselves to believe that any good can come of putting on their hats and coats and venturing afield. If anything, to do so seems to them like a leap in the dark, almost a breach of trust. Time is short, they protest, and there are so many claims upon it that the children's work is bound to suffer if they commit ourselves to extravagances of this kind. Activities are all very well, they think, but is not the proper place for them in the school precincts? To which the only answer must be that any philosophy of the activity approach which draws the line at taking children out of doors stops short of completeness. Caution is understandable, but the

niggardliness of mind which results in mere inertia is hardly to be respected. Education in the Junior School should always be an adventure—and what else is adventure but a facing-up to the unknown, an acceptance of risks? That out-and-abouting is well inspired is proved by the results.

Let the results speak for themselves then. We began this chapter with the tale of woe of Miss Hopeful. In the next we shall examine the case-history (authentic) of another teacher who began as happy-go-luckily as she did and yet survived to see his "adventure in life" justified up to the hilt.

(b) *Solvitur ambulando.*

It all began with Nature Study. In the early stages, this teacher had nothing more definite in mind than a conviction that many of the finer impulses of childhood could only be evoked by direct contact with Nature (whatever might be understood by the term), and that this evocation was not likely to occur under ordinary classroom conditions. In his view Nature Study was at once too big and too indefinite a pursuit to be included in any syllabus. Aquaria, bird-tables and similar what-nots might be useful adjuncts, but too artificial for what he had in mind. He had long chafed at the necessity of having to treat as a subject an interest which he regarded as "unteachable," being as he was the kind of man who had the feel of the country in his finger tips. He believed that an inherent love of the Wild was part of the make-up of all children, particularly boys : and yet here they were, stewing over a Nature Reader and hating it. Were they not made for woodcraft and scouting and birds-nesting? If only he could get some of the spontaneity and enthusiasm of their free-time exploits into their school work !

Evacuation gave him the chance he had been waiting for. At short notice, he found himself having to cope with a horde of big-city children who suddenly filled his school to bursting point. Seeing that there were not even enough pens to go round, he was presented with the perfect excuse for trying out a plan which, under normal conditions, he would have been nervous of attempting. Sheer weight of numbers forced him to put his hat and coat on and go out into the highways and bye-ways. Fortunately for him, the school was of the suburban type, within fairly easy reach of parkland and riverside fields.

Before long, things began to happen. Originally, be it said to his shame, he had not thought it necessary to adopt any system or plan for the conduct of these walks which he regarded, somewhat casually, in much the same light as he did his own week-end or evening strolls. To begin with they were little better than disorderly processions and if it had not been for his own enthusiasm in pointing out this and that en route the children might soon have tired of them; but then a remarkable change overtook these promenades. After they had been following their leader for a month or so, the children began to have ideas of their own. *They* decided where to go, *they* sorted themselves into groups (bird-watchers, botanists, map-makers), *they* appointed their leaders and, in fact, generally took charge of the expedition. Once they had got the feel of freedom, a new discipline was observable; it was no longer necessary for the teacher to be constantly on guard against fooling about nor to call them to order. Better still, the walks began to assume purposes which could hardly have been foreseen at the outset. From the children's prowlings along the river bank, the canal backwater, fir-plantation and disused railway siding there emerged the rudiments of simple ecological surveys. The various oddments, trophies and specimens which were

brought back began to pile up quite alarmingly: and to accommodate them a spare-room had to be converted into a sorting-house-cum-school-museum. The young collectors' keenness seemed to grow in proportion to these loads of material, far in excess of the teacher's anticipations.

In view of what happened, there seemed to be good cause for jettisoning the Nature Study syllabus altogether — but that was far from being the end of it. More was involved in the change than the fact that it was no longer possible to confine Nature Study within set limits: the activities which had ensued were now overflowing in all sorts of directions. Written English had ceased to be a word-spinning exercise and became instead a full-blooded reporting of all that had been seen, heard, talked about and done. The number of practical jobs that had to be undertaken was legion. Before long schemes of work in other subjects had either to be modified, curtailed or scrapped, for there was no resisting the wave of enthusiasm which carried the work along.

If, initially, the teacher had been guilty of a certain vagueness of mind he was now at an even greater loss to know how the venture would eventually work out and to what lengths it would go. Fortunately, he was not overburdened with theoretical considerations. Like the Creator, he looked on the work in progress and saw that it was good. Release from a set routine had somehow brought with it an influx of zest which affected not only the children's attitude to work, but his own. The greatest charm of a changed state of affairs was the intense business which infected the school. For once, a Micawberish optimism (or would it be better called *laissez faire*?) had been miraculously justified.

The unexpected proved a constant source of delight. For example, one day while out on their rounds, the boys found a broken-winged Kestrel, victim of October gales and telegraph wires. Possibly the humane thing to have done would

have been to put it out of its misery then and there; but no (on the principle that "finding's keeping") it must be brought back to school—and what a triumphal entry *that* was! At first it was temporarily housed in one of the class-rooms where it soon became the cynosure of every eye. No puppet-show in the world ever had so excited an audience as that little brown hawk devouring its first mouse. When it was explained to them that the bird could not be kept unless proper quarters and a regular food-supply could be arranged, the boys took the matter into their own hands. During the midday break and after school a labour-gang set about the task of building an aviary. Rolls of wire-netting cadged from a poultry-keeper parent, spare planks from the garden, with untold hammers and nails appeared from nowhere. Willing helpers were only too numerous. Having a proprietary interest in their mascot's welfare, the budding carpenters took a special pride in bringing their own tools and materials (there were none in the school), and even deputed their own rat-catchers.

More valuable, from the teacher's point of view, was the added stimulus given to the more formal work. Now that they could watch it at close quarters, nearly everyone wanted to make notes on the Kestrel's behaviour — how it turned docile after a meal and how wild and unapproachable it was when hungry, exactly how it disposed of a mouse and how afterwards it disgorged the indigestible fur and bones in sticky pellets — all the picturesque details of its daily habits. Sketches, done from life, had an immense appeal. "Let's make a book about it" was the next suggestion—and forthwith time had to be commandeered from Handwork. Then somebody looked out a book on falconry in the public library, and this in turn opened up a sideline into History which was followed with profit by one of the "brighter" groups. Another group, quite voluntarily, con-

tributed a neatly-sewn falcon's hood and leather jesses, reproduced with the utmost fidelity from diagrams. Yet another got together and between them compiled an original playlet called "Robin Hood goes a-hawking." Being voted a success, this went into full production, the parts being written up, with costume, weapons and armour made to order (all according to the text-book illustrations), but, of course, it was the bird which provided the focal-point of the action.

In this way, a chance occurrence served as the *fons et origo* of a fortnight's combined operations. Naturally the nine-days-wonder did not last (—the great secret with free-activities is to know just when they have outlived their usefulness—), but while it did there was no mistaking the spirit of industry that it engendered. It was quite phenomenal. Reading, Writing, Nature Study, Handwork, Art, with bits of History, Geography and Arithmetic thrown in, had become fused in a whirling centre of interest. Admittedly the interest was chaotic, but none the less dynamic. In any case, there was no stopping the course of events : the thing grew snowball-fashion, gathering momentum from day to day. Unintentionally, indeed, the teacher had started a revolution which threatened to sweep away all the forms of differentiate studies, or rather to sweep them into a single orbit. The desire to achieve this had been no part of his original intention : if anyone was responsible for the development which had occurred it was the children, not he. Willy-nilly, they had brought him to the threshold of the Activity School.

Little acorns make great oaks, they say. The way one thing led to another! To be presented, during registration, with a live carrion crow or a brace of ferrets, was, to say the least of it, disconcerting. What with one thing and another the premises began to look more like a menagerie than a

school; and anyone looking inside the hall might well have mistaken it for a surrealist curiosity-shop. The class-room scene, also, took on an appearance that could only be described as one of organized chaos. In one corner a group would be busy writing, while cheek by jowl, another group would be pasting the covers of a book. Stretched on the floor in various recumbent attitudes, others would be absorbed in painting. Others would be consulting works-of-reference in the library, or doing practical jobs. All very bewildering. And in the midst of it all His Majesty's Inspector might drop in and take one look at the advertised time-table (now no more than a museum-piece) remarking with a knowing air, "Ah, I see you're doing Music."

This abandoning of syllabuses meant that to some extent it was impossible to forecast with any accuracy what centre next week's free-activities might revolve round. If the likelihood of a new turn of events seemed remote, and at the first indication of any loss of interest in the work-in-hand, a counsel of war was held, in which both teacher and children pooled their ideas and came to decisions for a future plan of campaign. Junior resolves are apt to be fleeting at the best of times, however, and as likely as not something would crop up meanwhile to start them on fresh pursuits. Instead of being a place where the children were immured five hours a day for five days in the week, the school became a base for operations, a headquarters to be returned to joyfully. It lost a good deal of the institutional character that goes with enforced attendance and took to it some of the voluntaryism of a community-centre. The normal school-hours were still observed, but if anyone wished to carry on during the lunch-hour or after four o'clock he was free to do so : and many did—much to the disgruntlement of the caretaker !



THE PINAFORE MAKERS

THE PINAFORE MAKERS

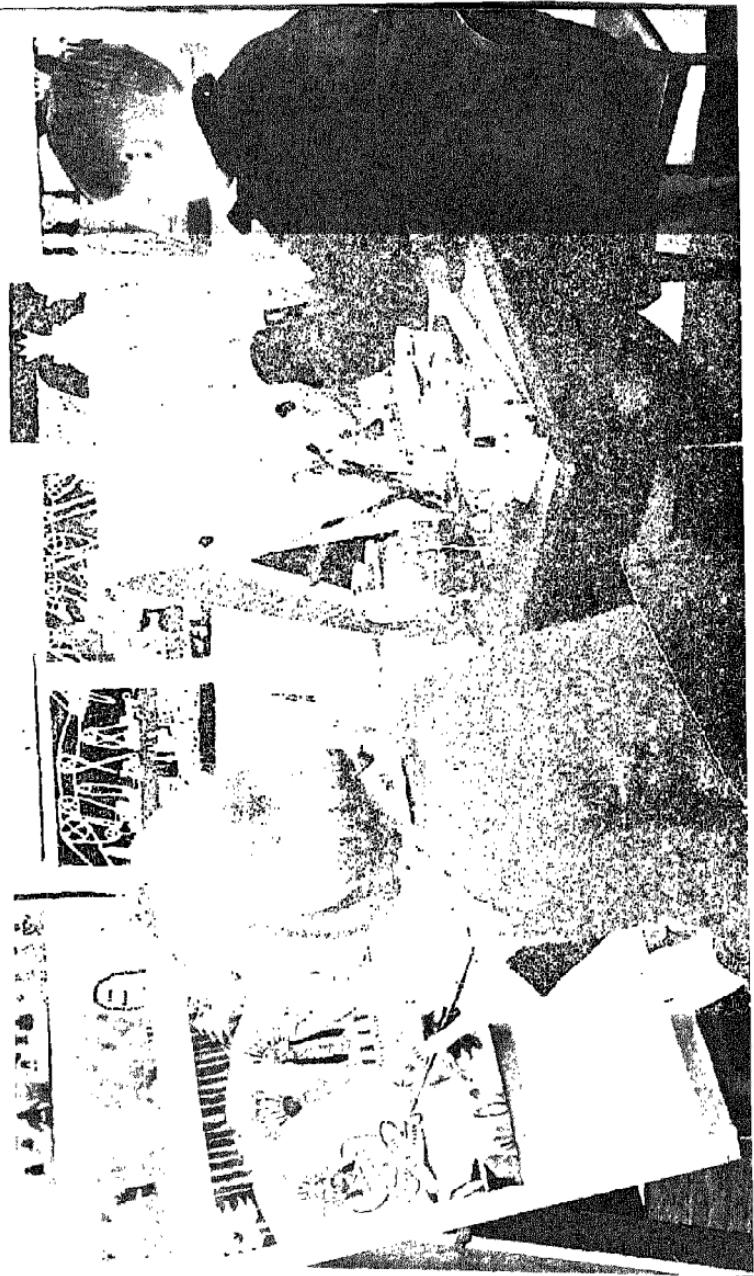
*An example of "controlled group activity." Having been given their instructions, these girls are left to carry on by themselves. This picture poses a question: How far should craft-work—and other activities in the Junior School—be differentiated according to the sexes?*

## NO TWO ALIKE

*Opportunities for self-expression are nowhere more obvious than in the art-lesson. But where self-expression is genuine the word "lesson" inevitably becomes a misnomer. Thus, Jean's painting has arisen out of a project in Geography, whereas John's is an illustration from some incident in his latest story-book.*

*Some readers will doubtless remark that the kind of art-room shown here is exceptional and that easels are an unheard-of luxury in most Junior Schools.*

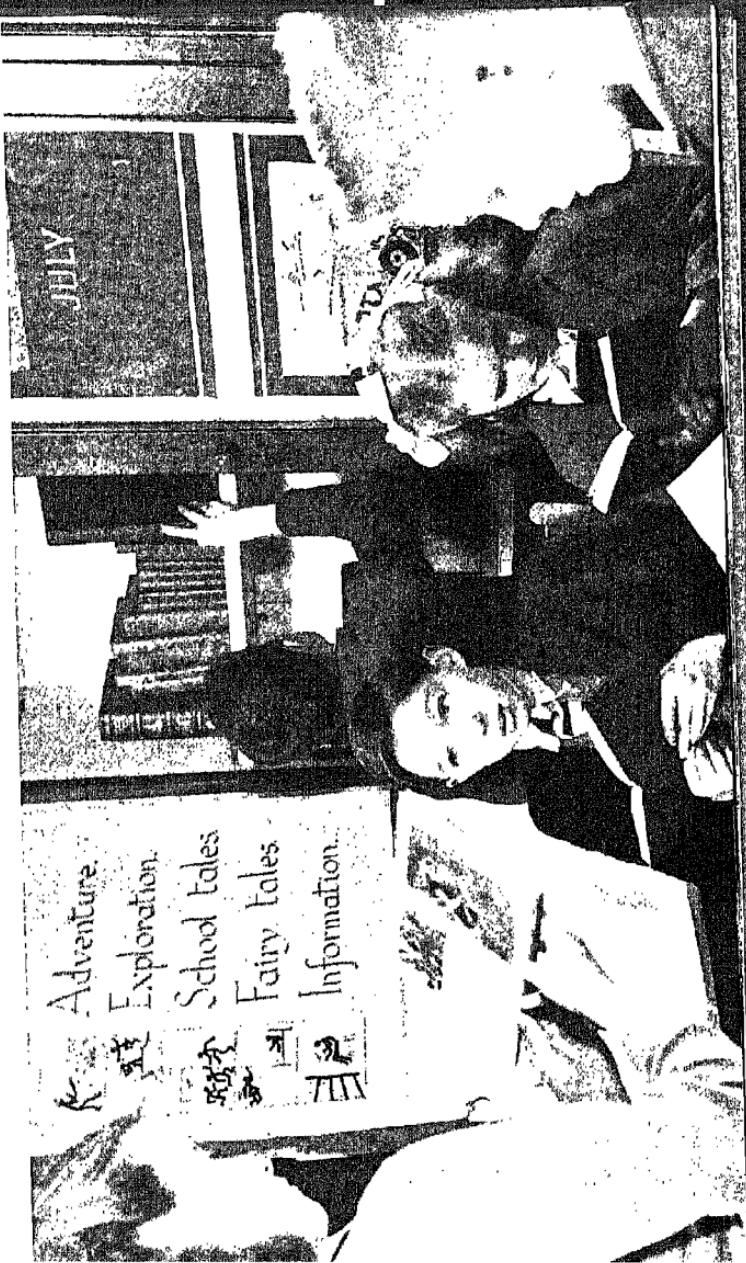
NO TWO ALIKE



## GROUP-READING

*No classroom in the Junior School should be without its book corner. In this group, a trio of backward 9 year-olds is being helped by a "leader," while another young reader makes his selection from the reference library. Within limits, juniors are quite capable of working by themselves: indeed, there are reasons for thinking that knowledge gained in this way may be more significant than much of that given them by the teacher.*

GROUP - READING



#### GRAMPED CONDITIONS

*It is often argued that sheer lack of space prevents the adoption of activity methods under "normal" classroom conditions. This is not altogether true, though it has to be conceded that lack of elbow-room is the Junior School's greatest bugbear. Here is a section of a typically over-crowded class busily engaged in woodwork. The photograph speaks for itself. While indicating that practical activities may not be absolutely impossible, it suggests the frightful difficulties under which, as often as not, they have to be undertaken.*

C R A M P E D   C O N D I T I O N S



## D R A M A   G R O U P

*There is a school of thought which would deplore the kind of performance illustrated here. It argues that the child acts most unfeignedly when he is least self-conscious. Dressing up, mise en scène, properties and audience are said to encourage exhibitionism and to be no part of the educational purpose of drama in the Junior School. While recognizing the element of truth in these objections, it seems wiser not to rule out the possibility of some kind of finished production.*

DRAMA GROUP



## ARITHMETIC WITHOUT TEARS

*“Arithmetic developed originally from the pressure of actual need,” we are told: therefore it is fitting that such numerical and monetary calculations as are required for everyday purposes should be learned the practical way. For this purpose—and others—the classroom shop can provide a valuable centre-of-interest, at any rate for the 7 to 9 age-groups, in whose experience the element of make-believe still plays an important part.*



## ARITHMETIC WITHOUT TEARS

## THE JUNIOR AS ARTIST

*A picture which speaks for itself, and at the same time poses a problem in child-motivation. This 9 year-old boy shows a marked flair for clay modelling, to which he is quite passionately devoted, yet he is classed as "backward" when it comes to Reading and Arithmetic. During formal lessons he finds it difficult to concentrate. Why? Is it his fault or the fault of the curriculum? Which is likely to be the more important for his future—the 3 R's (which, at least, may help him to earn a living) or the development of his special gift (which may or may not!): and supposing that his progress in academic subjects continues to be slow, are we justified in thinking of him as an "also ran"?*



THE JUNIOR AS ARTIST

#### A H I S T O R Y P R O J E C T

*A group of 10 year-olds arranging their model of a 16th century village. Each item—church, theatre, inn and houses—has been made by individual children, but the complete project represents the work of the group. In this case the idea arose out of the term's work in History, which was based on the Elizabethan period. Though History supplied the context, however, the group activity was not limited to a particular subject. Quite apart from the art-and-craft involved in the making of the models themselves, the children learned the architectural details and lay-out from text-book illustrations as well as from actual examples in the neighbourhood. In this way History, Literature, Art, Craft and Local Studies were combined in a single centre-of-interest.*



A HISTORY PROJECT



Put like this, it may appear that the whole affair was fortuitous and that to quote such a hit-or-miss example is an affront to common sense. The majority verdict on this teacher will probably be, either that he was a lucky dog to get away with so much, or that he was thoroughly irresponsible and did not deserve it. Be that as it may, the fact remains that he had never been kept so busy and had so many calls on his ingenuity, nor had he ever before enjoyed life so much as he did now. The amount of work done by the children, to say nothing of its quality, exceeded the standards of which he had hitherto deemed juniors capable. Being so much in the thick of it, it was hardly to be expected that he should be accountable for all the possibilities of good and evil involved in the new regime. His whole function as a teacher had altered beyond recognition, a metamorphosis which he could not find it in him to regret. Looking back along the road which he had travelled with the children, all reckoning the profit against the loss, he had no cause to feel ashamed.

### *(c) Association of Experience*

“ Education must essentially be a setting in order of a ferment already stirring in the mind : you cannot educate in *vacuo*.” So Whitehead. Yet how much of our primary school teaching has ignored the truth of this in the past, oblivious to the fact that the children were understimulated, dealing with abstractions for which they could have neither use nor liking? If there is an outstanding argument for beginning with the child’s awareness of life in his own back street rather than giving him “ straight ” Geography it is this : “ you cannot educate in *vacuo*. ”

We have seen how, once the school forgoes its sheltered existence and seeks its inspiration outside the gates, the

teacher's function undergoes a marked and subtle change. The mass of observational material and the variety of activities which arise out of it result in the classroom's ceasing to be an elementary lecture-theatre and becoming a clearing-house, workshop, studio and club all-in-one. Under living conditions so variable as these it is inevitable that the teacher's duties as instructor shall lose some of their pre-eminence and that he shall more and more be called upon in the capacity of a clerk-of-the-works, as a guide, philosopher and friend whose assistance is sought for as and when it is required. But because he is no longer quite so commandingly in charge of affairs there is no reason to think that his function is a whit the less important than it was. Far from it: his influence is likely to be the more vital for being exercised in different ways; and in no way can it be more decisive than in setting in order the ferment stirring in the minds of juniors whose eager wonder has been well and truly aroused.

While it is evident enough that children of this age are born scouters and sightseers—greedy for experience—it is also evident that they need considerable help when it comes to sorting out their tangled impressions into some shape of meaning. Experience provides its own stimulus, yes, but unless it is a stimulus *to some end* the effect is no more lasting than the fizz on champagne. The mere accumulation of sense perceptions does not amount to education any more, say, than the multifarious details in Darwin's notebooks added up to a scientific theory. If the "free-activity" principle is not to degenerate into licence, therefore, it must be governed by the teacher's understanding that a policy *laissez faire* is not the same as neglect.

Between the ages of 7 and 11, the child's curiosity becomes progressively more speculative and his powers of classifying and relating the tumultuous elements of his

experience improve rapidly; but even so his purposes are usually short-lived and, for want of prompting, he is apt to lose sight of them. Put it this way—that as an observer he is as keen as mustard but nothing like so keen, because not so able, when it is a question of finding a use for his observations. The blooming, buzzing confusion of the world as they see it is bewildering, intimidating to most 7-year-olds, challenging to all 10-year-olds; they turn to adults, and above all to the teacher, to know what it is all about. The teacher whose class is excited as it should be excited must be prepared to answer a hundred questions for every one he asks, to devote a large proportion of his time to advising, suggesting, encouraging and supervising. As a consequence of this it follows, incidentally, that because he will have less time for it, his formal instruction needs to be stepped up to a new high level of efficiency. The activity-approach may make life in the classroom more interesting for the teacher but it will certainly not make it easier: it will present him with a host of problems which rarely arise in the smooth running of a conventional routine.

To return to the children. "Local Studies", "nature walks", "school visits", "exploring the environment"—call them what we will—these are only the means to an end. Set any group of juniors on a trail and they will pursue it indefatigably: like untrained retrievers snuffling around in a thicket, they revel in their natural impulses and yet are strangely incapable of knowing what to make of them. It is as though they were content to accept the sheer thrill of living for what it is worth, and to leave it at that. Typical of this pointless endeavour is their craze for collecting ("saving" as they call it), any old rubbish that takes their fancy. "Ill-considered" trifles is hardly the word for it: they prize these trophies for the love of the thing, without considering. Between the experience and its application

(Expression) there comes a distinct hiatus: and it is at this point, if anywhere, that the teacher most needs to step in.

After each out-of-doors jaunt it should be an understood thing that a written statement of what has been seen and done is expected of the children. For this purpose, it is a good idea to provide special note-books or loose-leaf folios, pointing out that these are not to be regarded in the same way as exercise books (which are reserved for purely formal work) but rather as personal possessions. If the young reporters make a mess of them that is their look-out; the teacher will see to it that some sort of record is kept but will not insist on marking it. The first step is to ensure that each child is made responsible for his own work, for choosing the particular aspects of experience which have appealed to him, and for noting them while they are still fresh in his mind.

These unsystematic jottings may seem a poor substitute for the more orderly kind of notes which are taken down from a blackboard summary; but with all their imperfections they are likely to prove more valuable in the long run. It should never be supposed that juniors do otherwise than respond magnificently to being placed on trust. A perusal of any of these "notebooks of association", as Decroly called them, shows that the lease of freedom is rarely misused: they become diaries, scrapbooks, folios and magazines combined. Their appearance may not be altogether pre-possessing and their lay-out far from uniform, but the loving care that is often lavished upon them, not to mention the amount of material, is indicative of the high regard in which they are held by their owners. Like stamp-albums, what goes into them, being nobody's business but the collector's, is not felt to be work at all.

All the same, it is important that before committing their observations to paper the children should make some attempt to discriminate between those which are important

and those which are not; otherwise their reporting is likely to include much that is merely pointless and repetitive. How is "padding" to be avoided?

Immediately on their return to school after an expedition, there should always be some recourse to the reference library. It may be, for example, that a strange tree in the park or a Norman arch in the church have to be looked up and their identification settled. It is one thing for the teacher to say "That's a so-and-so"; it is quite another when the discovery receives an independent confirmation. It is true that the 7 and 8-year-olds, because of their lack of facility in reading, may not be ripe for independent research of this kind, but something can be done to prepare them for it by surrounding them with appropriate picture-books. By this means the need for books as a source of information can become a downright necessity and the child's attitude to reading influenced accordingly. With the older children the formal reading lesson then gives way to reading *as an activity*, performed as and when occasion demands. In other words, being geared to the same sense of urgency, the purpose of reading is indistinguishable from that which inspires the rest of the work.

Discussion, also, is invaluable, not only as a means of reducing experiences to something like order but of sharing them. Perhaps "discussion" is too pretentious a word to apply to the deliberations of juniors, however. Call it, rather, "talking things over." Children react keenly to all that they see and hear, they feel strongly about things: and it is more than exuberance which makes them want to communicate their excitement in speech and gesture. No Junior School will ever become the happy society that it ought to be unless its pupils are given that freedom of speech for which they crave. By binding itself to a Rule of Silence, it denies itself a vast field of opportunity as well

as denying the best impulses of its pupils. Many a so-called "backward" child is only backward for being shy or reserved and will open out quite astonishingly, given the chance to have his say among equals.

For this reason alone, there should be a place for informal conversation in the time-table, as an interim stage between the active exploration and getting down to the more serious job of writing about it. In the field the various groups will want to go their own ways and follow-up their own clues (and it can prove hard going for the teacher, trying to keep track of them all!). In school, these patrols should report back to the class as a whole so that everyone can see the general extent of the investigation. Swapping yarns and comparing between the groups should be encouraged, if only to "spread" interest and allow time for it to simmer. When talk flows freely, the teacher should be content to take a back seat, only interposing a word now and then to restrain the "forward" types who tend to monopolise the proceedings or to prevent the conversations degenerating into mere garrulosity. He should always be at hand to answer difficult questions or to settle an argument that looks like getting nowhere. On the whole, however, he will do well to remember that juniors are surprisingly capable when it comes to thrashing out their own little problems.

Suppose for a moment that we sit-in on one of these imaginary conversations. "A" remarks that his group has seen a great flock of gulls passing over the town. "Where could they be going?" he wonders vaguely, to be answered, pat, by "B"—"South-west, of course. That's where the sea is. The canal goes north-east and they were flying the opposite way." "In V-shapes, just like jet-fighters," adds "C", whereat "B" chips in again to remind them that ducks adopt a similar flight-formation: "It's for streamlining" he affirms, as if that explained everything. "Yes,

but rooks don't fly like that : we saw them this morning by the rectory and they were all anyhow." "Gulls only come inland during bad weather" is "F"'s not very pertinent contribution to the line of thought. "Don't be silly : it was a lovely sunny morning," sneers "A". "Anyway they do. My dad told me," "F" contends stoutly—"It's true, isn't it, sir?"

At this point the teacher is more or less forced to step in, but even now he refrains from giving anything like a casting vote. To do so now might be to nip in the bud an inquiring spirit that begins to look promising. This group is on to something good; let them nose it out for themselves, he thinks : on the other hand, unless he offers a timely hint or two, the argument will almost certainly end in stalemate and the interest be dissipated. If he gives a straight answer the issue is decided out of hand and there is an end to the problem : and if he gives no answer at all the deadening effect is much the same. What then, shall he do?

Actually there is no difficulty in finding a middle way. If only he can see it, the teacher has these children exactly where he wants them, appealing to him for aid. The only question is : can he give it without giving too much? Perhaps he can best come to the rescue by posing a question or two of his own. Did the birds seem to be following a definite flight-line and if so why not have a look at the map and see what distances are involved? How quickly were the gulls flying?—and supposing they maintained the same rate how long would it be before they reached the coast? How long would it take a man to cover the same distance by road, rail or aeroplane? (Quite a nice bit of arithmetic here, worked in on the sly!) And that arrow-head formation—it is certainly worth looking into. As for the bad weather theory—pace "F"'s pater—it may be only an old wives' tale or there may be something in it : the only way to form an opinion is to study the meteorological conditions. After

all, it may have been fine and sunny inland this morning, as "A" was quick to point out, but that in itself proves nothing. What was yesterday's radio forecast for the North Sea area?—and how about cutting out the weather charts from yesterday's newspaper?

Who knows?—maybe from such straws in the wind as these a new centre-of-interest may evolve and what we are now witnessing is its inception. Whether or not it develops later into a fully-fledged "project" on stream-lining or bird migration or weather forecasting is really a secondary consideration; the main thing is that the children, through a free exchange of experience and opinion, shall as far as possible be in a position to make their own deductions. Only when confusions of experience have shaken down into something like sense, when the raw material supplied by observation has been chewed over in Association, can the activity-process reach its crowning achievement, which is in Expression.

## ARITHMETIC

It is often said that Arithmetic is a cuckoo-in-the-nest so far as activities are concerned. To some extent this is probably true, but not entirely. "Arithmetic developed originally from the pressure of actual need and there is no subject in the curriculum except English that gives so much practical help to other subjects."<sup>1</sup> While it cannot be denied that Arithmetic allows precious little scope for "free" activities and that usually it requires to be made a fixed point in the teacher's time-table of formal instruction, there are many ways in which it can be brought in indirectly, through topics, projects and play-way devices. "Look and say" games instead of parrot repetition for multiplication tables, carefully graded exercises in practical weighing and measuring, classroom shops in which the children make their purchases and learn the uses of money, are a common feature nowadays in many schools, Infants' as well as Junior. As with all other subjects in the curriculum, efforts are being made to introduce an element of informality into the work and to strike a note of greater realism. At the same time there is a growing tendency to reduce attainment standards to an indispensable minimum—the Four Rules in Number, Money and Measurement and little else—the theory being that what is lost on the roundabouts is gained on the swings. In other words, the tendency is to believe that the fact that the 10-year-old child cannot "do" proportion is relatively unimportant, provided that his general development is such that he can see and feel proportion in his daily life.

The theory is admirably inspired, and no harm can come of relaxing mental pressures which, as we have seen,

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(1) Primary Education (Report of the Advisory Council on Education in Scotland), para. 144, p. 37.

were only maintained in the past for unnatural and unnecessary reasons. All the same, one suspects that many of the latest attempts to bring Arithmetic within the scope of other activities savour not a little of artifice. Even in the Infants' School it is not every child who needs to be taught addition through physical movement or who can be made to "realize" the meaning of subtraction by taking six steps forward and three steps backwards, done to a musical accompaniment! Preciosity of this sort is better avoided. Since the inclusion of Arithmetic in the curriculum is demanded by the needs of society rather than by the felt needs of the child, there is little point in disguising the fact unduly. Recognising that it is imposed, let us get on with the job of teaching it in the most efficient way known to us—through honest-to-goodness instruction. Straight lessons, given daily in teacher's time, will do more to ensure that juniors reach the requisite levels of attainment than any fiddling around with projects or centres-of-interest. We need make no apologies for regarding activities as incidental to the main scheme of work in Arithmetic; for have we not already agreed that Arithmetic is itself no more than a side-show, an excrescence almost, in any primary curriculum?

The inescapable truth is that arithmetical processes are, *au fond*, mental. The processes involved in other activities may be emotional, imaginative, or æsthetic. In the main it is a good thing that the young child should come to know the difference between an ounce of sweets and a pound of apples through physical experience, that he should have practice in the handling of actual money; but even in the arithmetic of daily life there is a place for a certain mental slickness which has nothing to do with experience of this kind, and which may not be cultivated by it. What happens, for example, in the transition between apparatus-work and its application needs closer study. Roughly speaking, it is

true that the process of representing quantity by mathematical symbol is much the same as that involved in any process of working from the concrete to the abstract, but only roughly speaking. It is not just that in pure mathematics the relationship between the symbol and the thing represented becomes highly tenuous. In one sense, number is itself an abstraction : and it may well be that certain types of mind are so constituted as to be happier dealing with figures as such *without* the intermediary of any sort of association of experience. In this respect it appears that the final implications of the activity-method in Arithmetic have yet to be thought out. It is conceivable that for some children the method may, in the final analysis, be a positive hindrance rather than a help. Occasionally one hears cases of students who are weak in mathematics and who, rightly or wrongly, attribute their disability to having been introduced to the subject through so-called practical methods : they claim that as a result of their early grounding in concrete calculations they have never developed the adroitness required in the higher processes. That is as may be—and doubtless there are many mathematical duffers among us who would account for their incompetence by an explanation diametrically opposed to this—viz., that the subject has always been distasteful and meaningless to them because they were never given more than the mechanics of the thing.

Different minds different incentives. At one time the child may be happily and profitably engaged in weighing out his pound of sand sugar, or counting his change after a transaction at the classroom shop counter; at another he may find mental arithmetic or doing sums quite an enjoyable experience. The important thing is that he should get both in the measure that he needs them. If one group of 10-year-olds shows aptitude and skill, there is no reason why they should not go ahead with problems in ratio, vulgar

fractions and simple interest while others of the same age continue with less advanced work. As with Reading, so with Arithmetic, there is a great deal to be said in favour of cross-classification according to subject. It enables the boy or girl with a special flair to have a run for their money and leaves the lame-duck and the general practitioner to find their proper place. In the old days of the competitive free-place examination it was considered a disgrace for a school to be "put down" for not being up to the mark in Arithmetic: this despite the fact that in all walks of life many outstanding men and women freely confess their inability to cope with more than the simplest everyday calculations. Though some of the token values which once attached to Arithmetic are still with us, the high premium set upon it is a thing of the past; and no junior need be made to feel ashamed at his lack of performance in it any more, say, than in Music or Art.

But if the incentives of high-pressure competition are to be dispensed with, it is clear that activities have an important part to play in providing other and better incentives. The ambitious child and the child who is cut out to be a mathematician will need no inducement, but what of the vast majority who have no special ability and feel no particular attraction in these matters? What about the 7-year-old, straight from the Infants' department, and still a little fearful of the stern prospect of growing up? They, more than any, need to be kept occupied with counters and beads and dominoes and slot-machine games and make-believe shops. First and foremost, they must be nursed into the confidence that Arithmetic is neither abstruse nor difficult, but easily within their grasp and worth the having. The first sums done on paper should arise out of their actual occupations—and there should be hundreds and hundreds of them, for nothing succeeds like success and "getting it

right" is a joy that never palls. If progress is slow in the early stages, no matter: the important thing is to ensure that *every* child is won over to thinking that he can do something. Arithmetic will get nowhere unless it begins by being fun. As for more formal work, there can be only one rule of thumb: to adopt a clearly defined method and to stick to it throughout the school.

Provided that the right foundations have been laid in practical work in the Infants' School, there are reasons for thinking that the middle or later years in the Junior School can be concentrated more specifically on bookwork Arithmetic, with activities brought in only incidentally. If "only incidentally" sounds slightly offhand, it should be remembered that the need for practical calculation will constantly be cropping up in a host of connections outside the formal Arithmetic lesson. It may be that a rabbit-hutch is being constructed, in which case the wood must be accurately measured and diagrams drawn to scale before cutting. Perhaps for their weekly entertainment the young performers may wish to open their own box-office, complete with tickets, paper money (earned on a "points" system), and choice of seats. By 9 or 10 many juniors will be beginning to feel themselves above "playing at shops", but they will still find themselves in plenty of problematical situations, actual as well as make-believe, which call for the exercise of arithmetical skill. It is then, when the knowledge already gained is seen to supply a genuine need, that the formal training receives its most vital confirmation.

Apart from this, the most obvious place for practical activities with the two higher age-groups in Arithmetic is when some new stage is about to be entered upon or a new principle announced. The teacher who embarks upon arca-measure, for example, without first ensuring that the children have made a survey of the playground or a nearby

field is not only storing up trouble for himself later on—but deprives himself at the outset of a stimulus to the work that he can ill-afford to miss. Many might think it a flagrant waste of time to spend a whole morning examining a local speedway-track, measuring the perimeter and noting down the record times for the course; but the truth is that it produced a clearer understanding of the meaning of speed in terms of miles per hour and aroused a far keener interest than the most carefully prepared lesson could ever have done. It should never be forgotten that the 9 and 10-year-old junior is intensely concerned with whatever is real and actual. To him the racing motor-bike is no less than a chariot of fire and anything to do with it takes on the spirit of healthy excitement—even Arithmetic. An age of technics should find no lack of gadgets with which to catch his curiosity in the how and why of things, from locomotives to water-closets. Having caught it, what follows is bound to lead further into the fields of mathematics and the science of everyday life.

At the moment the standard of Arithmetic teaching in Junior Schools varies enormously from place to place. One head-teacher would not dream of touching vulgar fractions; another has to (and a good deal more besides) because his Authority still insists on a high level of attainment. While it is too much to hope for anything like an agreed syllabus for schools in all areas, it is apparent that some official statement of minimum requirements in the subject will sooner or later become necessary. The sooner the better for most teachers. Meantime it is left to the discretion of individuals to decide how best to apportion time and effort between formal instruction and informal activities. All that we can say for certain is that there is a place for both, and leave it at that.

SECTION III  
IN PRACTICE

## IN PRACTICE

It is agreed that the precise solution to the problem of working out a curriculum "in terms of activity and experience" will vary according to local circumstances and will always tend to be individual to the school. The aim of this book has been to define the nature of that problem and to indicate broadly the lines of advance which seem generally desirable, having regard to the child's personal welfare. Granted, the entire argument rests upon the assumption that the 7 to 11 years constitute a period marked by clearly distinguishable characteristics, and that this assumption is one which is widely contested. To say, however, that "the whole tissue of "philosophic fiction" invented by Rousseau . . . and regrettably perpetuated by Stanley Hall and even by Freud, is blown sky-high"<sup>1</sup> by the latest scientific research, is a gross overstatement. Admittedly the words "child", "childhood" or "junior" are abstractions, and there is as much danger as convenience in using them in that they seem to take no account of the infinite variety of character and temperament. But in considering what common educational policy is most suitable for a given age-group some resort to generalisation is unavoidable—always provided that the "fiction" is not mistaken for the philosophy. On the whole, there is no reason to doubt that the lines of development as described in previous chapters are eminently desirable. The outstanding question is: are they feasible under existing conditions?

Clearly a great deal depends upon the personality of the Head-teacher, particularly upon his ability to secure the willing co-operation of his staff. Nothing is commoner than to hear that such-and-such a school "used to be run

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(1) T.E.S. October 2, 1948. (Review of "Adolescence" by G. M. Fleming.)

on activity lines" but that since Mr. So-and-so left it has reverted to type. This in itself suggests that the Activity Schools, like their congeners, the *Arbeitsschulen* in Germany, may never become the general rule but figure, rather, as special types. It may be, also, that because of the importance of the personal factor, we shall in many instances have to be content with the "activity class" as distinct from an all-embracing activity school. If that were to prove so, it would not invalidate the idea of an activity-approach, nor would it diminish the leavening influence of such schools as adopted it. It may be that a thorough-going observance of all the principles, as stated here, demands too much of ingenuity, energy and insight from the average practitioner. It may be that we shall have to be content to see schools applying these principles selectively, adopting one or two forms of activity without attempting the full range. If this turns out to be the case, no one need be under any misapprehensions about the practicability of the main idea, at least if the evidence of teachers who have tried it may be accepted as valid. The following extracts are from written statements by two Head-teachers, each of whom is working under conventional auspices and under all the usual restrictions. Both, it should be said, were trained, and for many years taught, according to the orthodox, instructional methods: and both have been conversant with the activity-approach long enough to give considered opinions.

1. "After trying activity methods for only four years, one hesitates to pass judgment, but certain conclusions can safely be drawn. First and foremost, the children are noticeably more alert and much more interested in what goes on in school. They have developed a habit of work and of enjoying it. Each makes the maximum progress commensurate with its ability. As regards attainment levels, of the B stream which has

just completed four years on activity methods, 20 passed the first test of the Special Place Examination, 4 gained places at a Selective Central School and one at a Grammar School. Previously (when formal teaching was the rule), not more than 7 or 8 ever succeeded in passing the first test and only very occasionally would a candidate qualify for the Central School.

Perhaps a greater cause of congratulation is the indefinable change which has come over the children. They have poise, will tackle anything and will converse freely with the many visitors to the school. Everyone agrees that there is a happy atmosphere of work about the place—work for its own sake. My teachers have to work very hard, marking is excessively heavy, but they too, are happy because they are not frustrated in any way. Now that they have seen what activities can mean, none of them has any desire to return to the old methods."

2. "We have been experimenting in the activity approach to mathematics for several years and with activities in the wider sense for some time, *i.e.*, "Free choice activities", centres of interest, co-operative group- and class-activities, etc.

I should explain that this school caters for what was once a slum-clearance area and, as quite 40% of our girls are of the C grade it is necessary to give them as much active experience in their school life as possible, especially in arithmetic. Eight years ago I found that while the girls were fairly good at mechanical arithmetic, they were quite incapable of tackling any application of principles. This was clearly beyond them; they had no idea of solving a problem in words.

Hence, at 7 years of age they now begin by handling yard-sticks, tape-measures, scales and weights, various

types of capacity measures, clock-faces, time-tables, etc., in order to bring them in contact with everyday experience. The three-times table, for instance, is no longer learned by rote but is built up from activities with the yard-stick (marked off in feet). The seven-times table is done by working with the calendar. Understanding of simple fractions ( $\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $\frac{1}{4}$ ,  $\frac{1}{8}$ ,  $\frac{1}{16}$ ) is gained by measuring out of lbs, ozs., pints, quarts, and through actual purchases in the classroom shop or school post-office. The use of block graphs serves a practical purpose in checking the daily dinner numbers.

Individual cards, carefully graded and worded so that the girls do most of the experimenting and discovering themselves, cover the work of the class arithmetic scheme and usually pave the way six months ahead for the next class. I mean by this that *the individual-or group-work in activities is often ahead of purely formal written work*. By the time the A stream girls are 10 plus they have covered fractions, area, scale and have experimented with percentage, averages and ratio, using such apparatus as pendulums, water-clocks, spring-balances and similar devices. The C stream girls are familiar with shopping in all its aspects, with budgeting for weekly expenditure, with measuring for clothes and calculating for household decorations. The results, both with the brighter and more backward girls, have been most gratifying. The joy that comes with the realisation of creative power has induced in all feelings of self-reliance and given an additional stimulus to the work, not only in Arithmetic but in other subjects."

Evidence of this kind might be added-to indefinitely and the sum-total of it all still remain inconclusive. Even if the

opinion given in the first statement (that the progress of B stream children under activity conditions is superior to that normally to be expected), could be checked and confirmed by controlled experimental research the results would prove nothing.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps, when all is said and done, there is only one sure way to catch the elusive spirit and essence of "the activity-approach" and that is by seeing it in operation. Before resting our brief, then, it may be as well to pay an imaginary visit to an actual school and see what happens. Let us call it :

#### AN AFTERNOON AT DRAB STREET (JUNIOR MIXED)

The school premises are old and dismal, situated in the industrial quarter of a large town. The junior department is housed on the second floor of a barracks-style building originally meant to hold 250 pupils and now accommodating well over 300. There are six classrooms and a hall in which a complete assembly is barely possible. The worn staircase and rickety balustrade are far from inviting : and yet, somehow, immediately on entering one senses the cheerful, lively atmosphere of the place. The porch is decorated with naive wall-paintings, the work of 8-year-olds by the look of them; and the corridors are so covered with pattern-work that an otherwise stygian interior is irradiated with brightness and colour. The mass effect is bizarre, not to say startling, and more than gives a hint of coming excitements.

We find the Headmaster occupied with a class, yet he has no hesitation in leaving it to receive visitors, unexpected as we are. A word of explanation and the children are left to carry on by themselves, without any watch-dog being set to keep an eye on them, either. Apparently there is no need.

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(2) *i.e.*, they would merely indicate an improvement in the cognitive faculty. The all-round educational development, described in earlier chapters, could hardly be the subject of scientific inquiry.

The staff-room is next door, but though the interview is protracted, there is no sign of the riot which we half expect to hear break out. Outside, children are constantly coming and going, but the movement is orderly and controlled; there is nothing that could be called a disturbance. During the course of our conversation several children knock, enter and ask for this or that—the key of the gramophone-record library, permission to use the hall for a rehearsal, the loan of a reference book. In each case we cannot help noticing the ease and intimacy of relationship between master and pupil, how the two meet on equal terms.

The Head explains that except for a 45 minutes Arithmetic period each morning, the time-table is completely fluid. In effect, there is no time-table. There are three Music and Dance periods, four for P.T. and one for Games, but these are not regarded as fixed-points; they may be taken on different days and at different times by mutual give-and-take between members of staff and the various classes. If there were two halls or even a spare room, this arrangement might be easier than it is; but generally speaking (ruling out wet days!) it works. Teachers and children alike are free to undertake activities as and when they feel inclined or as occasion demands. If, for any reason, a pupil loses interest or feels "left out" there is nothing to prevent his opting for an alternative of his own choosing, even if it means his going off to another classroom. Roughly, the idea is that children can only give of their best when they are completely absorbed and that if they are not in the mood for singing, say, it is better not to insist upon it.

This school has a philosophy which might be summed up in the phrase: "Freedom from fear of failure," in that nothing is attempted until and unless the individual child is seen to be ready and eager to learn. If, on entry, he is still unable to read and shows no disposition to try—fair

enough; but care is taken to see that he is never far from the sight of books. Usually the example of his more accomplished fellows supplies all the incentive that is needed.

How is this diagnosis of individuals possible with an average of more than 50 per class? The Head smiles wanly and shows us a formidable card-index containing the case-histories of every single pupil. Each of these gives, in digest, an exhaustive account of the various factors of development so far as these can be ascertained—parents and home background, health record, temperament, behaviour problems (if any), I.Q., Infant School record, attainment and progress in Reading and Arithmetic, special interests—besides a number of incidental comments and assessments by teachers who at one time or another have been in charge of him. At first sight some of the entries might strike one as rather trifling, but a detail that seems insignificant at the time and which is quickly forgotten may be a valuable pointer for the future. Are the records reliable? He sighs and throws up his hands as much as to say "They ought to be in view of the amount of time and trouble involved in their compilation." In any case they represent only the administrative side of what is essentially a human problem. Getting to know each boy and girl personally is difficult and would be quite impossible were it not for the social exchanges and friendly intercourse which characterise activity-schooling. Thank heavens the numbers on roll are not greater than they are: schools which exceed the 300-mark are too swollen to function satisfactorily as a community for juniors, he thinks.

Organization? In the first place, he has found that arranging for activities at the lower end of the school is a very different proposition from what it is later on. Most 7-year-olds prefer to work singly or in pairs, at least so far as free activities are concerned. They are not ready for

group-work without close supervision; and far from resenting the teacher's direction and suggestion they seem to like it. Their capacity for sustained occupation being limited, they are presented with a wide variety of choice in their free-activities and can switch from one to another in a short space of time. Co-operative projects come later (somewhere between 8 and 9, he thinks), when the gang-spirit and personal independence are more pronounced. A fixed daily routine having been dispensed with, it is for the teacher and the children between them to decide what order of activities shall be followed and how a balanced programme can best be worked out. (The Head explains that this system originated during the days of evacuation. At first the boys voted for football and nothing else, and play football they did—for two whole days. Tired of this, they asked for painting as a change and for another two days it was painting, painting, painting. "We stood by and waited to see what would become of it all," he says. "It took time, but when they had got football and painting out of their systems they began to see the need for discipline, diversity and order. I think we wore them out with unlimited freedom! But it certainly gave us a new slant on the way their minds work. Ever since then we have stuck to the system of first getting their point of view and trying to make sure that the need and purpose for devoting time to a particular subject is clear to everyone. Kiddies are like the rest of us—they like to feel that they are being consulted. Of course, the teacher's say is the deciding factor. If he feels that too much time is being spent on one kind of activity it is up to him to call a halt, but if he is worth his salt he will not do so unless at the same time he can make it quite plain to the children why they should leave off. Situations of this kind only arise where there is a lack of complete understanding between

teacher and class. Usually there is no difficulty in deciding how the day's work shall be portioned out into formal and informal periods so as to satisfy the desires of both.")

The Head is very keen on what he calls "communal periods." Instead of a morning assembly taken by himself there is a daily service conducted by the older children who choose their own hymns, music and prayers. Sometimes they may expect him to say a few words or ask one of the teachers to play the piano for them, but not always. "We have given up trying to push religion down their throats," he says. "We wait for it to come out—and it's there alright."

The environment? Yes, it is pretty grim, but they make what use they can of it for local surveys. Unfortunately it is not much good for Nature Study, but then there is always the school-camp in August to give these city-bred youngsters the feel of the countryside.

Music? Singing is always unaccompanied. The Head is no pianist and has only a slight smattering of musical theory. It is not long since he took delivery of a consignment of recorders and now he is an enthusiastic member of a 9-year-old recorder band—"picking it up as we go along," as he puts it. In the lower school music is closely associated with physical movement. He is not so sure about percussion-work for the 7's and 8's: he would rather see them building up their own pattern melodies through rhythmic dance and suspects that they should not be introduced to instrumental and orchestral music until they have got the feel of music-making in their bones. Yet for dance, drama, poetry and several other activities music supplies the right aural background in the same way that the art-work on the walls supplies a visual background. The gramophone is constantly in demand, but here again it is the children who decide whether or not it is wanted and what records shall be

played. There is no pretence that this usage amounts to critical or even appreciative listening, though eventually, he hopes, it may encourage one or the other; rather the music is meant to suggest or evoke a mood appropriate to the activity that it accompanies.

Supplementary aids? He believes that broadcasting has an important part to play in extending the learner's experience both directly (as in the performance of music, poetry and plays) as well as vicariously (as in the reconstruction of historical incident through dramatic interludes or "actuality" visits to foreign lands in which a "willing suspension of disbelief" occurs in the child's mind so that the listening experience comes as near to being "real" as makes no difference). In the same way episcope and film-projector are brought in to illustrate what the teacher cannot hope to convey by his own unaided efforts. He looks upon supplementary aids, neither as substitutes nor as up-to-date educational fads, but as contributing in their own right a special quota of vivid experience. Listening and looking with discernment, he points out, are as necessary activities as any. Lately his colleagues and he have been putting their heads together to thrash out this business of relating the available "aids" to forthcoming schemes of activities. Which films shall be ordered in advance and which broadcast series selected? Incidentally, there is a daily staff-meeting at which current problems are discussed informally, and changes of procedure agreed upon. This does not mean that plans of campaign are decided behind the children's backs: far from it—it is simply to enable members of staff to pool their resources and experience and to find out what the others are doing. If hold-ups and disappointments are to be avoided, there must be a constant interchange of views, not to mention considerable restraint and private sacrifice on the part of the individual teacher. There is no

room in the activity-school for clash of personalities: each must dovetail into the team or else be a disturbing element. Throughout the school there is only one rule which applies to pupils and staff alike: that no one shall interfere with the enjoyment of another.

And how do teachers respond, to whom this is all new and strange? Whether or not they settle-in depends upon how long it takes to reconcile themselves to looking at things from the children's point of view. Not everyone finds it easy to put his class first and himself second. Old-stagers, those who have taught long enough to think that professional orthodoxy is unchangeable, still lay claims to a kind of divine right. Nor are they the only ones who find it difficult to accustom themselves to a hurly-burly of affairs that to them seems anarchic. The Head has had students straight from college who could not break step and fall-in with the children's tempo—"the sort whose secret ambition is to be a sergeant-major", as he calls them. Luckily, they are rarer than they were. After a month's observing and moving around among the children, the new teacher quickly learns to adapt himself to his changed function—and the school's invigorating climate does the rest. If, at the end of his testing-out period he is still recalcitrant, then he is advised to go elsewhere. In all probability the implication is that he has no liking either for juniors or for honest hard work.

Hard work? Most certainly it is: and when the long day is over there are various out-of-school activities to be seen to—the Pets Club, the Collectors' Club, the Fretwork Group and the Choir, the Model-makers, the Football and Netball Committees, not forgetting the daily issue of library books: all voluntary, of course, but unless the teacher is utterly time-serving he will usually find himself inveigled into taking part in one or other of them. And then there are the many interviews with parents. Extraordinary the interest

which parents take in their children nowadays! Always at the school's doorstep and always to be welcomed and shown around. Very different from what it used to be, he thinks. He is glad of the change which has brought home and school into closer touch; and glad also of the co-operation which he now gets from most parents. Some of them have volunteered their services as wardens in the evening when the junk-playground is left open till eight o'clock—the only way of keeping children off the streets in a district like this, he explains.

By this time we have been listening so long that the lunch hour is almost at an end. A dinner monitor knocks and politely reminds us of the fact, asking whether the visitors will be staying for a meal. Apparently the girl has taken no chances, for the places at table are already laid out and in no time at all the food is placed before us. Such service, not to say forethought! Yet the Head seems to take it for granted. These children are used to making their own arrangements. Most of them come from poor homes, but there is an air of modest assurance about them and a distinct grace of carriage. During lunch we learn that they rarely quarrel among themselves, that bullying is practically unheard of, that the usual accidents which occur as the result of rough-and-tumbles are unknown; and incredible as it sounds we may well believe it. At the moment most of them are scattered in various parts of the building. During the midday break one classroom is temporarily converted into a library, open to anyone who cares to use it, and woe betide any offender against good behaviour. Though drawn up by a committee of 10-year-olds, the rules are strict—far stricter, we are assured, than those in force at the Public Library. In another room a group of girls and boys are jiggling around the gramophone; in another a solitary 7-year-old is rolling and pounding a lump of clay with

enormous relish. "It's going to be a dragon," he tells us proudly, "you'll see—with horns." From the window we look down into the two playgrounds, one a bare stretch of concrete, the other stacked with an assortment of builder's materials. The first, we note, is comparatively deserted, only a few youngsters aimlessly chasing one another or standing around in clusters. The other is crowded. Even between sessions there is no end to activity, it seems, only an intermission.

And so to afternoon school.

Dropping in on a class of 10-year-olds, we find them engaged in an art-lesson, if it can be called that. Some are bent over desks, others recumbent in a variety of attitudes with their sheets of paper pinned to the floor, others at the wall-blackboard roughing out a composition in chalk before venturing on a final draft. The subjects chosen are different in every case. Maybe the girls are inclined to decorative free-pattern whereas the boys favour illustration, but no two are even faintly alike. We must have been in the room at least five minutes before we realise that there is such a person as the teacher present. Like ourselves, he moves among the rows of tousled heads, watching, noting, occasionally stopping to ask a question or to give a word of advice.

Jimmy intends to cover his sheet with an all-over pattern of weird faces (better not to ask why), Joan's painting is of a great lady, complete with coronet and train-bearers (so delicate in its pinks and mauves that the resemblance to Marie Laurencin would be considered reminiscent in an older artist). Joan has no hesitation in informing us that "It's because we shall be acting 'The Princess and the Pedlar' after play, and I'm going to be the princess." Terry's is a memory drawing of a football match (maybe because he is school cricket captain and yesterday the team suffered its first defeat!) Ann's effort is highly fantastic, a

lurid array of scarlet and crimson demons. "It's the Fire Dance," she explains. Jeremy stands apart, obviously the lonesome type: he has no use just now for brush and paints. All he wants is to model from clay, a sea-lion or maybe it will turn out to be a walrus with match-sticks for tusks. Harry, finishing early, says that he has had enough and is off to the library.

Meanwhile there is a hum of quiet conversation. The teacher is perhaps the most silent person in the room. He goes round unobtrusively, offering, at most, a comment here and there, a word of criticism or commendation.

Playtime arrives. Some carry on painting. Others tidy up. Others see to it that the hall is cleared for dancing and the gramophone got ready. No one ever misses dancing, not even Harry though he has to be dragged from the library and his adventure story at the last moment.

Before the teacher puts in an appearance there is a good deal of horseplay, handsprings and cartwheels, pummelling and tumbling; sheer *joie de vivre* and yet there is all the lissomeness of wild creatures in their cavortings. Now the music begins, specially chosen to get them limbered up and responsive to changing moods. It is sad: they hang their heads and pace funereally. It is defiant: they strike an attitude, posturing with rare bravura. It is gay; they fling their arms and abandon themselves to slapstick.

Next the Fire Dance, a favourite of theirs which they have worked up into quite a set-piece. Stravinsky and de Falla too advanced for 10-year-olds? Not a bit of it. They writhe like flames. They are possessed. Ragged Pat, (an illegitimate), is suddenly transformed and becomes a Salome. Terry struts and mouths like a Chaplin or a Massine. Each is so utterly absorbed that selfhood is forgotten and deeply-hidden emotions are laid bare, subtly conveyed in language that no speech could express. Tenderness, pity,

and terror, comedy and tragedy, it is all here: and the wonder of it is that though it begins as make-belief it grows in fervour until the effect is almost frightening. To the onlooker it seems barbaric.

The dancers draw near in a ring, their faces averted from the centre. For them the red scarf on the floor really is a sacrificial blaze: and these are holy dreads and ecstasies that they feel. A tinpot, cracked record has unleashed in them forces that can only be described as archaic, the existence of which we have never suspected (Or is it that we have found it more convenient to forget them?)

Still the tension grows: and we are not altogether sure that we approve of the revelation that is taking place before our eyes. Dead-end kids into ballerinas? Dynamic it may be, but this intensity—these ardours—are they not profane? Surely these children have been specially trained and the whole performance is slightly unnatural? In an aside, the teacher in charge confesses that she "does not know the first thing about technique." The movements, then, are in no way externally conditioned, except by the influence of the music itself. If there is eloquence of feeling and sensitivity it must come from within. The explanation of the phenomenon that we are witnessing can only be that these children are completely uninhibited.

The class is not alone in needing a breather. After the nerve-wracking fury of the Fire Dance it is a relief to see how easily the children return to normal. If only we could ourselves snap out of it as quickly! A pause now and while the boys pick a record for the mime that is to follow. "A Night on the Bare Mountain?" The very thing. They listen to the first side. "I know, lets do man in a haunted house," says one, and straightway it is agreed.

Dead silence now. Most of the class sit around on their haunches, eyeing the six protagonists critically. The

leader advances, mincing along, rolling his eyes and swaying like a drunkard. The others close in from behind, retreat as he looks fearfully across his shoulder, and make rings around him as the music quickens. He flies to a corner and crouches, shuddering. The ghouls follow—and suddenly they YELL. Such howls and gibbers as might lift the roof. Really, these juniors can be the very devil! Inhuman, and still it goes on until the clown throws up his hands, and collapses. A burst of handclapping from the spectators ripples round the room. At that they break off, skipping away to their corners and looking mighty pleased with themselves. "That's all we can think of, miss," says the leader, simply.

Phew!

Again the music begins. The girls muster at one end, the boys at the other. What is it to be this time? Grouped round the stately figure of Anne, five or six girls make obeisance while the rest, singing softly, go through the motions of a minuet. So this is what she had in mind in her painting and this is the fairy-tale play of "The Princess and the Pedlar." If we had not been warned in advance, we should not have noticed any transition from "free-dance" to "dramatics." Nor, at the time, do we notice that the music has petered out and that no one troubles to rewind the gramophone. Its purpose is served. The play proceeds, without words. With solemn ritual, the King's envoy arrives, heralded by courtiers processing slowly to the foot of the throne. (Is this one play or two, we wonder?) The pedlar makes his entrance, showing his wares to the maids-of-honour and suddenly, for no reason at all, he breaks into speech . . .

The teacher claps her hands. "Enough now," she thinks. Today's performance is only a try-out and there is no time for more. Besides, she has found it better to break

off while the creative impulse is still strong, than to carry on until it has exhausted itself.

Back in the classroom they talk over the plans for tomorrow. That done, they are free to go home. Before doing so, however, there is an assortment of odd jobs to be done. Jeremy is loath to leave without finishing his precious walrus. Harry and his cronies want to borrow the Glazounov record for another quarter of an hour: they have thought of a better idea for that haunted-house sequence and would like to give it a trial. Tonight the Collector's Club meets and the flower-garden has to be dug and the selection-committee must decide which paintings are deserving of display. . . .

The afternoon has gone so quickly that we can hardly credit that it is long past four o'clock. Was it so much time wasted? What has been learned? Measured in terms of "knowledge to be gained and facts to be stored" probably not a great deal. Measured in terms of activity and experience, a great deal more than we had dared to suppose possible. Physical and emotional awareness have surely been quickened and deepened—and if some of the depths that are revealed are slightly disturbing, the fault is in our own complacency, not in the children. If we are honest with ourselves, we shall admit that any drawing back in pious horror, any feelings of embarrassment, any fear of what may result from the removal of tight controls, is due to prejudice and to that extent a refusal, or a failure, to face up to life. Whatever reason may protest, in our hearts we know how right and decent it is, and how important for their present and future well-being, that these youngsters should return home tingling and satisfied in their every fibre, supremely confident, full of eagerness for the excitements that the morrow will undoubtedly bring forth.

## TAILPIECE.

Stand outside the gates of any Junior School at the close of an afternoon session. What happens? At four or thereabouts a bell rings and a moment later a horde of children comes tumbling out, as full of exuberance as a lemonade bottle is full of fizz. Whooping and chattering, they run off down the streets. One by one, the teachers emerge, the playground is deserted, the day's work concluded. With slight modifications, what you have witnessed is more or less the same as what takes place at the end of a worker's shift. The bell is the signal for a wished-for release. Everyone has only one thought, to get home and away from it all as quickly as possible. The school, like the factory, is abandoned. It belongs to the caretaker.

Stand outside another school. Outwardly its appearance is the same. Again the bell sounds . . . but the minutes pass and where are the children? One or two groups come out talking quietly among themselves. Can it be that the others are being "kept in"? Not they: and if you inquire you will discover that there are a hundred and one good reasons that detain them. Here there is no sense of sudden release, no whooping for a freedom gloriously regained at the day's end. Why should there be? This school is a society of children and they have made it their own. It belongs to them.

Possibly an unfair comparison. Without making more of it than it deserves, is it not a sad comment that the first represents the rule and the second the exception?—and that the one is to the other as twilight is to morning?

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